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[A SNAKE IN THE GRASS.]

## HELEN'S DILEMMA.

### CHAPTER XXVI.

I FANCY that most people are acquainted with the appearance of Rotten Row in the middle of May—the very height of the London season. The park was looking lovely one fine morning just two years ago—green and fresh and shady, and thronged with hundreds of the fashionable world, some walking, some riding, some gossiping, some flirting. The walk beside the Ride was gay with pretty cotton and foulard dresses, and white and black and scarlet parasols.

The Ride itself was crowded with the very cream of London equestrians. Portly papas and pretty daughters, slim-waisted and erect, in perfectly-fitting habits; girls in parties of three, followed by their grooms; married ladies, married men, children, were all walking, trotting, or cantering to and fro, the subject of criticism or admiration with many of the loungers with their arms on the rails.

Right up the middle of the Ride Sir Rupert

Lynn is walking his horse. He is alone, and wears a moody, disconcerted expression on his face. "Man evidently delights him not, nor woman neither," and yet he is in far better circumstances (as far as money is concerned) than he was last year. His uncle, who died at Naples, has left him a round sum in the funds. Mortgages no longer press upon his mind, the horse he bestrides is a three-hundred guinea hack (and he was quite justified in the outlay). He has plenty of money now—health, wealth, good looks, lots of friends—why, then, is he not looking more cheerful? Why does black care sit behind him on his satin-coated steed?

He is wishing for the unattainable; he is discontented with his life. There is a large mote obscuring his vision, and were we to give that mote a name we would call it "Helen."

He has travelled far since we have seen him last, but travel where he may he cannot eradicate her from his mind. Anger, misgiving, love, that will not be quenched or silenced, are constantly struggling within him. Slowly he threads his way through the crowd, exchanging bows and nods and "how d'ye do's" with numbers of acquaintances.

He is revolving in his own mind whether the game is worth the candle; whether this idle, lotus-eating life of pleasure is not a sickening monotony, ten times worse to endure than the solitudes of the Andes or the Rocky Mountains. A long shooting trip—a life of intense hard, physical work and continual excitement—might cure him. He would not lend himself to such women's weakness any longer. He would see Torrens and have a talk to him about a long journey. Torrens was always game for starting off to the other end of the world at about two hours' notice.

Just then his reflections were suddenly interrupted by a riding party cantering briskly past—a stout, square, elderly man on a large bay hunter, a smart young fellow that he knew in the Guards, and between them a pretty girl in a dark blue habit on a beautiful thoroughbred chestnut.

Something in her laugh, the colour of her hair, and the shape of her side face (of which he had only caught a passing glance) reminded him of Helen—yes, of Helen! But what infatuation—what madness! His brain *must* be softening! Was it at all likely, he asked him.

self, ironically, that Helen would be mounted on a valuable thoroughbred, would be an accomplished horsewoman, in the gayest of spirits, riding with a peer of the realm on her right hand through Rotten Row?—Helen, whom he had last seen sunken in beggary, steeped to the very lips in misery, with actually the ghastly word *want* written in legible characters on her sunken features? Could Helen and that laughing, golden-haired girl be one? No more probability in the idea than that the Albert Memorial would descend and move bodily down the park!

Thus arguing with himself, Rupert put his horse into a sharp canter, and by some irresistible impulse followed the trio up the Row—followed, but could not catch them. They kept ahead at a good pace. How admirably the girl rode! how squarely she sat on her horse! And then they suddenly turned out of the park, and were lost to sight among the streaming mob of carriages.

Two evenings later Sir Rupert found himself at the opera—more by the wish of a friend of his than any desire of his own.

His friend was an old school-fellow whom he had not met for years—a school-fellow who had sought and found his fortune at the Antipodes, and just recently taken a run home to see all the old places and the old people, and was enjoying himself with the zest of a school-boy in his holidays; had all the little bits of new gossip and scandal at his fingers' ends, knew the appearance of most of the celebrities—male and female—and was, in every way making the most of his time.

He kept constantly staring about the house, and drawing his companion's most unwilling attention to this, that, or the other.

A late arrival—several late arrivals, in a large box to their right—of course claimed his marked interest. After staring at them for some three minutes he turned round, and tapped Sir Rupert with his finger, and said, in an eager whisper—

"Do you see those people just come in in the box to your right—elderly lady and gentleman, girl, and young fellow? I'll tell you a queer story about the girl. Look at her now—she is coming to the front! Awfully pretty, is she not?"

Sir Rupert turned his head with languid indifference in the desired direction, and his careless gaze fell upon Helen!

Yes, undoubtedly Helen this time. He seized his opera-glass; he could hardly hold it, his hand shook so much.

By a great effort he steadied himself, and gazed once more at the third box in the second tier.

Yes, there she was, looking well, and rich, and radiantly happy. Her colour had returned, her face was wreathed in smiles. She was listening with evident complacency to something that that young puppy behind her was leaning forward and saying.

She was dressed in a cream-coloured satin evening dress, cut square, and trimmed with quantities of lace; two large diamonds sparkled in either ear, another at her throat, a prodigious bouquet lay on the front of the box before her, as well as a mother-of-pearl opera-glass.

Sir Rupert took in all these luxurious details with a long—long gaze, and then set down his glass.

"Well!" said his friend, cheerfully. "You have had a rare good look at her, and now what do you think of her, eh?"

An unintelligible muttering lost in his mustache was the only reply his companion was able to vouchsafe him; but this did not seem to matter in the least, for he proceeded, eagerly,—

"She's a Miss Brown, a colonial heiress, with pots of money, my dear fellow—thousands a-year. Tavy Leesborough is going in for her, and lots of others; but, from all I can hear, she's not easy to please!"

"And where did she come from?" asked

his now composed and deeply-interested auditor.

"Well, that's the queer part of the business!"

"Oh! then there is something queer about her?"

"Not that, exactly; but she did the oddest, maddest thing any girl, not out of her mind, ever did before."

"Yes!"

"She was coming home to her relations—strangers—in the character of an heiress—relations to receive her with open arms. You know, of course!"

"Well—well, go on!" very impatiently.

"Unfortunately, it struck her that she would put their affection to the test, and she changed places on board-ship with their governess that was to be, and the governess died before they landed, and consequently she was left in no end of a hole. No one would believe that she was an heiress—neither her solicitors, nor her own people, nor any one—so she had to work for her bread in real earnest. Then she got engaged to some fellow, I believe, and all was going on swimmingly till this governess—the dead one's child—turned up, and of course every one siddled it on her. She was turned out-of-doors. Needless to say her lover washed his hands of her, and she was left to her own resources to support this brat as best she could; and then this other woman's husband appeared on the scene—came home from India a raving madman, set fire to her lodgings, and then committed suicide. Sounds like a play, eh?"

But Sir Rupert's set lips had lost the power of speech.

"Then her Tasmanian friends came over, and lifted her back into her proper sphere. I heard it all from old Towers himself, that old buffer there in the back of the box. She was *staring!* Wouldn't believe it to look at her now, eh? Of course he is awfully down on her relations and the solicitors. Wonder what the lover feels like now, eh? Rather sorry for himself, eh?"

The lover's feelings could not be expressed as he sat in rigid silence listening to this tale.

When the curtain was raised for the second act he rose and left the house.

He went down and stood in the street, and tried to collect his senses.

Passers-by looked with amused amazement at the tip-top swell in evening dress who was standing bareheaded in the moonlight.

"So Helen was right all through—really Helen Brown, the heiress, and no impostor. Her piteous appeal came back to him now. 'Won't you believe in me, Rupert?'"

The words seemed branded into his very heart with hot iron. He had scoffed at her confession, laughed at her pretensions, and cast her off. Yes, in spite of his protestations of never dying faith. But who would believe that any girl would have been capable of such an act of Quixotic folly?

Now she had regained her identity, her friends, and her thousands. Now she had opera boxes, thoroughbreds, and diamonds; and now, of course, she would never again speak to him! And yet, now that he knew her to be what he had at first believed—as pure and unclouded as the lilies of the field—he felt that he loved her ten times better than ever. Not because she was rich and desirable in every way, as with a sudden flush to his very forehead he told himself that all the world would fancy. No, but simply because she was, and would be, the only woman he had ever loved.

He slowly made his way back to the opera house after a considerable absence, and people were leaving as he went up the stairs. At the top of the corridor he was smilingly accosted by a very fashionable lady and her very pretty daughter, who bestowed many gay smiles and nice little speeches on her special admiration—grave, handsome, distinguished-looking Sir Rupert Lynn.

Alas for him! At what an unpropitious moment to meet his late betrothed face to

face! Had he been alone who knows what might have occurred? But he was not. He was listening to and flirting with a very fast-looking, very *décolleté*, noisy girl. (Helen, he was only listening; he was caught in the toils, and could not escape! Nothing less than a cry of fire would have freed him.)

As Miss Brown, Mrs. Towers, and several attendant and obsequious cavaliers came down the lobby for one instant there was a little block at the top of the stairs, and he and Helen stood almost side by side.

Would she bow to him? He almost held his breath. Would she even look at him? Yes, with a cold, indifferent glance, as of that bestowed on an absolute stranger. This tall young queen of society, in a white fur mantle, passed on downstairs, followed by her train, one carrying her bouquet, another her fan, a third her opera-glasses.

"That's the new beauty, Miss Brown," smirked his fair jailer. "Very aristocratic-looking for a colonial, is she not? and worth her weight in nuggets!"

#### CHAPTER XXVII.

"Hulloa, where on earth have you been?" said Sir Rupert's companion, suddenly appearing, and giving him a pretext to release himself at last. "What in the world became of you? You missed a treat, I can tell you!" Then suddenly struck by his companion's gravity and pallor he said, "You were not ill, were you? You look rather seedy."

"I felt the place rather warm—the gas, you know, and I just went outside to get a breath of fresh air."

"Well, you missed Albani's last solo. It was splendid; and you missed more than that! I went round to old Towers' box between the acts, and got introduced to the heiress. Ah, ha, my boy! and if you had been with me you would have been presented too!"

At this pleasant prospect Sir Rupert could not refrain from an involuntary shudder.

"She's even better-looking than you'd think," pronounced his lequacious companion, lighting a cigar. "She stands looking into, which is more than you can say for a lot of girls—all so frightfully made up; but there's no deception about her, I can tell you! Such a skin—like alabaster! such a pair of eyes, such a pretty little mouth!"

Sir Rupert winced. It revolted him to the very depths of his soul to hear this outspoken, coarse-minded friend of his appraising Helen's charms.

"By George! I think I'll enter for the stakes myself, eh? A clear course and no favor, now the lover is done for. I don't suppose she would ever look at him again? What do you say?"

His companion made no direct reply, but hailing a hansom, said, as he put his hand on the door,—

"Well, good night, Stratton. I suppose I can't drop you anywhere, can I?"

"Are you not coming on to the club?" cried his friend, agast.

"No, no!" impatiently. "Good night."

"What the deuce is up with the fellow?" said Mr. Stratton to himself as he puffed angrily at his cigar, and walked along briskly in the direction of Pall-mall. "Can't make it out! Can't make head or tail of him!"

removing his cheroot, and surveying it with indignant interrogation. "Bols out of the theatre—heat—all stuff! Looks as if he had seen a ghost! Some one in the house, of course—but who? Always a reserved cove—close about his affairs! Heavens!" slapping his leg exultingly. "I have it! Yes, I have it, or my name's not Tom Stratton! He is the lover, by George! It was down near his place she had a situation! It was after he saw her he was struck dumb! No wonder. Small blame to him. And she—she looked a little bit queer, too, now I come to think of it, when I mentioned that I was with an old school-fellow—a Sir Rupert Lynn! Oh

I say! won't this be a fine story for Bob Sladen; but after some reflection it dawned upon Mr. Stratton that he had better keep his discovery to himself. Recollections forced themselves into his mind—recollections of other days, when Rupert Lynn, although a most loyal friend and popular comrade, resented very decidedly any idle interference with what he was pleased to consider his own private affairs.

No! no! For the present he would keep his own counsel, and let events unfold themselves as they pleased.

And what about Sir Rupert! His reflections were not of the pleasantest, as he divested himself of his dress coat, got into a shooting-jacket, and throwing himself into an arm-chair opposite his fire, proceeded to light a cigar, that universal soother of men's ruffled feelings, and to face the situation.

To judge by Helen's demeanour—by her look of frozen indifference, of total lack of recognition, as far as he was concerned—"there was" no appeal." Why, she did not even change colour, or betray that she had ever set eyes on him before by so much as the flickering of an eyelash. What marvellous self-possession! Who that knew her as he had done would have believed that no marble statue could be colder or more composed when occasion required! (He was not aware that she had seen him from her box, that she had steeled herself to the meeting, and had been well prepared for that accidental *rencontre*.) Would she ever forgive him, or had she banished him entirely from her heart and thoughts? Should he write to her? Should he endeavour to obtain Katie's good offices on his behalf? What should he do? For several days he could not come to any distinct conclusion. It drove him nearly frantic to hear other mendicants "the fair Helen," as they called her; to listen to them weighing the pros and cons; the chances for, and against this and that rival suitor; to hear them laughing and chaffing, these supposed aspirants, before his very face; it was simply maddening. No wonder fellows at the club began to say among themselves that Lynn had a deuce of a temper, and that he could be more sarcastic when he liked than Roushy; and that was saying a good deal! What the mischief had come over him; he used to be such a cheery chap; it was not money; it was not a woman; he never bothered his head about them! What was it?

It was some satisfaction to Sir Rupert to know by hearsay, at any rate, that his place had not been filled as yet. The beauty was hard to please. She laughed at sentimental speeches—snubbed the too confident of her adoring circle. If he dared to think that it was on account of a dim lingering regard for him, how happy it would make him. But no! no! he dared not lay that flattering unction to his soul. He was not so mad as all that!

He had seen her several times since. Once in the park reclining under a white lace parasol in a superbly appointed landau, along with a benevolent-looking lady. There had been a black among the carriages close to him, and their eyes had met—this time a faintly perceptible flood of pink had dyed her cheeks; but her eyes gave no sign. She turned them away at once and looked straight before her, presenting nothing but a haughty, rigid, little profile to his gaze.

Another time he had seen her at a grand ball—the belle of the evening—besieged with partners, and he had held aloof and afar off, with wild, angry, bitter thoughts in his mind. Alas! who could be blame but himself? He had to thank no one but himself that he stood in the background—a stranger, instead of being as he once was, the happy man to whom all her dances, her pretty looks and gay smiles belonged. Her met he once more at the Academy, escorted from picture to picture by Tavy Leaborough—gladly, oh! gladly would he wring Tavy's neck—and herself attracting as much notice from the crowd of fashionables as any painting there.

Tavy's chances had been spoken of with some favour; his mother was backing him,

and so were the heiress's people. Tavy was a young man who had a very sincere appreciation of his own merits, and thought it by no means beneath his deserts to be escorting the prettiest girl in London, and to be the envy of all (male) beholders. Tavy was an excellent specimen of the *petit crêvé* of Paris—the "masher" of London—the modern Macaroni or Blood. He loved the theatre, he delighted in dress. His mission was to stand about in attitudes and be admired. He liked champagne suppers, he liked the society of his fellow-mashers, he liked his liberty—but his debts were pressing—he would not mind renouncing his freedom in favour of Miss Brown. Yes, there would be a certain *hades* in walking off with the heiress, just under the noses of half-a-dozen other fellows. With the *mater* to back him he had a first-class chance.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

BLANCHE DESPARD had been a true prophet when she had declared to her mother that "Katie would bring her round." Alluding to her cousin Helen, the bringing round had been a much more difficult and delicate manoeuvre than she anticipated; for Helen could never compel herself to think of her aunt and her eldest cousin without feelings of intense repulsion. Nevertheless a truce was made, the hatchet was buried, and peace ultimately proclaimed.

Katie's lameness had been getting worse and worse, and she had been brought up to London to be placed under the care of a famous surgeon. On one of her days with him she had called at Mrs. Towers, and had had a long, confidential talk with her friend in the back drawing-room. Helen was inexpressibly touched by her wan, little face—sharpened and pinched with wearying and constant pain. She saw a great difference in her cousin since the days they used to ramble about the woods of Cargew together, and she used to keep up with Loo-Loo and herself with the greatest ease—using her stick with great effect. Now, although it had been changed for a crutch, she could hardly drag herself across a room.

"You will have to come and see me, Helen," she said, nodding her head emphatically.

"Dearest Katie, I could not—it would be impossible!" returned Helen, colouring warmly.

"And why is it impossible? Why, of course, it is because of mother and Blanche. But you will have to make up and forgive them, sooner or later. You see we really are your own relations, though no one would have imagined it to be the case, judging from the warm reception we gave you!" with a bitter, little laugh.

"I think friends do as well as relatives, if not better," said Helen, "and you were always my friend, and always will be!"

"And you will have to come and see me, for I can't come and see you any more," returned Katie, with decision.

"Not any more! and why not?" cried her cousin, in dismay.

"Because Dr. White thinks that nothing will do me any good until I have had a complete rest. I am to 'lie up,' as he calls it, and not move for the next three months. Fancy, three months in bed, with my leg in a kind of iron cage!"

"Poor Kitty, how dreadful for you!"

"Yes—it is not a pleasant prospect, is it?" shrugging her shoulders. "And this is positively my last appearance, so I came to tell you all about it, and beg you—yes, beg you, dearest Helen—for my sake, to let bygones be bygones with the *mater* and Blanche. I know I am asking a great deal, and it is more than half pure selfishness on my part; but think of me lying up there in that horrible back room for the next three months, hardly seeing a soul, with little to do but study the pattern of the paper on the wall; for I am not to use my arms, not to write, not to work; and imagine what a boon your visits would be, dear Helen. I may not be with you long,"

laying her hand on her arm, and looking into her face with wistful eyes.

"Nonsense, Kitty! you must not say such things," said her companion, impetuously. "I won't listen to you; but as you seem to wish it so very much, and for your sake only, remember, I will try and bring myself to meet your mother, but with this understanding, that we meet for the first time now as absolute strangers. There never was such a person as Miss Helen Brown, the governess. I insist on this being thoroughly understood."

"I am sure it is awfully good of you, Helen; and you may be very sure that mother and Blanche will be only too delighted to fall in with that view of the case; it will not be nearly so awkward for them."

"Then we will make a new departure," continued Helen, rising and pacing the room. "Your mother can come here and see her niece, the rich heiress, who has just arrived in this country with her friends Mr. and Mrs. Towers, and we will have no unpleasant allusions to a former acquaintance. I leave the entire matter in your hands; it is your affair. I am bringing myself to a forgiving frame of mind entirely for your sake."

It will hardly be necessary to add that Mrs. Despard eagerly clutched at the olive branch extended by her rich niece, and lost no time in making a formal call, in the character of an affectionate aunt!

On the safe and happy neutral topic of Helen's late father Mrs. Despard held forth with sisterly eloquence. To listen to her now, he was dearer to her than brother had ever been to sister since the creation of the world; and all her devotion for him she was ready to transfer at a moment's notice to his daughter, her dear niece.

Miss Blanche contented herself with maintaining a smiling, sympathetic silence; her active little brain was already weaving many schemes on behalf of her lovely cousin. In the first place, Blanche intended to eat a certain quantity of that very unappetising morsel "humble pie;" then she would take her newly-found relative to her bosom and adopt her as her dearest, most confidential, and cherished friend. This would naturally be mutual—for Helen seemed an impulsive, simple-minded girl, easily amused, easily angered, easily appeased, and very backward in knowing the ways of the world. She, Blanche, would gain her entire confidence, find out her feelings with regard to Rupert, and strain every nerve to keep them apart; the armistice, much less treaty of peace, must on no account extend to him.

These are a few of the ideas that were passing through Miss Despard's mind as she sat in Mrs. Towers's drawing-room, occasionally glancing at her mother and cousin, and drawing an elaborate pattern on the carpet with the tip of her parasol.

To a certain extent she was enabled to carry out her schemes.

Helen was a constant visitor in Cadogan-crescent; her visits were intended for Katie, to whom she brought quantities of the most lovely flowers, fruits, all the new papers, magazines, and books; but naturally she frequently encountered other members of the family, and was drawn into teas, dinners, and drives.

Sir Rupert's face of unqualified amazement the first day he beheld Helen occupying a seat in the Despard landau was beyond description. He could hardly trust his eyes as he saw Helen and her aunt rapidly rolling down Bond-street, evidently engaged in the most friendly conversation.

He was standing in a shopdoor, unseen by both. What did it mean? If she had forgiven her relatives, would she not also pardon him?

The very idea sent a glow through his veins, and he walked off rapidly to Cadogan-crescent, in the hopes of finding Blanche at home, and sounding her on the subject.

"Yes, Miss Despard was in the drawing-room," the servant informed him, and in an-

ther moment he and the perfidious Blanche were face to face.

"Come to have tea with me, Rupert? How nice of you!" she cried, extending both hands. "Simmons,"—turning to the footman—"tea!"

That was not precisely the object of her cousin's visit, but he was unprepared to dispute the question, and gracefully accepted the situation.

They talked round the subject that both knew must, ere long, come on the tapis; for some time discoursed of the theatres—French plays and the opera—criticised some costumes at a recent ball, and "cut up" a new book.

At length Sir Rupert broke the ice by saying—

"Your mother is not at home, is she?"

"No. In fact," pausing, cream-jug in hand, "she has gone to an horticultural *fête* with Helen," she added, impressively.

"Indeed!" replied her cousin, still stirring his tea slowly, and without raising his eyes. "Then you have all made it up?—have you?"

"Yes—entirely. We are now the best of friends!" emphatically.

"How very pleasant for you. I wonder if—if—Miss Brown intends to extend her forgiveness any further!"

"It was all her own fault from first to last!" returned Blanche, totally ignoring his broad hint. "What business had she to come to us under false pretences—trying to take us unaware—masquerading as a governess?"

"She did succeed in taking you unawares, with a vengeance!" said Sir Rupert, looking full into his companion's eyes.

"Yes," colouring slightly, "she certainly did; and you too!"—spitefully. "She will never forgive you!" she added, triumphantly.

"And pray why not? Why should I be more under the ban than others?" he asked, quickly.

"Oh!" airily waving her hand; "you see we are her cousins—her own nearest and only blood relations. She could not go on keeping up a feud with us; and she is so fond of Katie! But you——" and she paused.

"Yes, and I?" he asked, with a touch of defiance in his tone.

"A woman can forgive her own sex sooner than she can a man, especially a lover, who casts her off and disowns her!" Sir Rupert winced.

"She is terribly proud, and was awfully delighted to have won the affections of a baronet under the guise of a pauper. She liked the idea of being loved for herself alone, and trusted in to any extent; and it seems that you shattered all these happy notions rather rudely!" concluded Blanche, with a smiling nod.

"It is quite true. The truth seemed too hard—too impossible to credit. It was not because she was a poor governess I cast her off, as you called it, for I had never known her to be otherwise. It was because I believed her to be another man's wife. Could you not help me to obtain a hearing, Blanche, to beg her forgiveness?" drawing his chair a little closer, and looking at her pleadingly.

"No, it would be useless!" cried Blanche, very sharply. "I know from what she has said from time to time, that all love or liking for you has entirely died away; that she never wishes to see you, or to speak to you again; that were you to humble yourself to the very dust, she would spurn you, as you spurned her! I am telling you the truth," added Blanche (who certainly lied courageously, and well), raising her light, steely eyes to those of the unhappy young man at the opposite side of the little tea-table.

There was not a blush on her cheek, not a quiver of an eyelash. She must be telling the truth, thought her companion, and he was the more inclined to believe her when he mentally beheld Helen's cold, haughty impassive appearance each time that they had met.

"I wish to spare your feelings as much as

possible," proceeded Blanche, affectionately, who perceived with inward triumph, that her plan was working well. "There is no need for you to humiliate yourself unnecessarily; and I may as well tell you in confidence that it is all but settled that Helen is to marry Lord Leaborough!"

"So I have heard," replied her cousin, at last forcing himself to speak; "but I never believed it. Tavy Leaborough is a needy, useless young fool, and not fit to wipe her shoes."

"Oh! not such a fool as he looks, by any means," returned Blanche, with engaging confidence. "He has a title, she has money. It is just what the *chaperones* call a most suitable match."

"It is nothing but vile exchange and barter, and maddening to think of," said Rupert, angrily, searching for his gloves and hat.

"Well, Rue," said his cousin, standing up to say good-bye, and holding out her hand; "I am very sorry for you—very—but it will be all the same a hundred years hence! Console yourself with that reflection."

"Not much consolation in that," he answered; "but all the same I'll try and see her, and speak to her again. Yes! I will, Blanche, I can't let my whole life go by the board without one struggle. It may be no use—very likely I shall fail; but you know the lines—

'He either fears his fate too much  
Or his deserts are small,  
Who fears to put it to the touch,  
To win—or lose it all,'"

"The idiot!" cried Blanche, with a stamp of her foot, as the door closed on her cousin.

"Idiot! besotted idiot! However, he won't be warned, and must take the consequences, and I shall make them exceedingly unpleasant. Yes, I shall," addressing a fat pug that lay coiled up in a low arm-chair. "I shall work upon her feelings, and if she does not mount the high horse, and give him his *congé* once for all—my name is not Blanche Despard!"

Sir Rupert was unshaken in his resolve to see and speak with his late *fiancée*—although he had small hopes of success. He saw her the day after his visit to Cadogan-crescent walking in the row with Lord Leaborough, whilst Mrs. Towers, and another lady, complacently brought up the rear. Tavy Leaborough was got up with enormous care in a sad-coloured suit, very high collar, and very pointed patent leather boots; and was bending down to the white parasol beside him with an air of intimate friendliness that made Sir Rupert's heart burn like fire within him; for the pretty white parasol seemed to laugh, and to heed, and to listen, with complacency to empty-headed Tavy's small confidences and compliments.

#### CHAPTER XXIX.

It seemed the very irony of fate, that their deadly enemy (had they but known it) was the only possible link between Helen and Rupert. An enemy to Helen, with a hatred born of envy, and the feeling one woman naturally experiences towards another who has robbed her of her lover. An enemy to Rupert, in that she was resolved to stand between him and the fulfilment of his dearest hopes; and, as far as he was personally concerned, her bosom was torn between two maddening passions—love and hatred.

Had Katie been as formerly she would have been a ready and gracious "go-between" confidante and peace-maker, and readily healed the rift between her cousins; but Katie was lost to all social life and interests, and spent her days and nights in an agony of racking pain.

Rupert had cast his thoughts to Loo-Loo, but at once abandoned the idea as preposterous. How could he bring himself to pour his joys and sorrows into the ear of that volatile and mischievous monkey? Mrs. Despard would be decidedly unsympathetic; Mrs. Towers and Helen's new friends he did not know. There was no one for him to turn to except Blanche, and with what a very discouraging result we have just seen!

Helen, on her part, was only too ready to bury the past, and accord her free forgiveness to her late betrothed—weighing everything in her mind—softened now by the ease of her own surroundings; she was prepared to make just allowance for his want of confidence. At first she had hardened herself, and her views on the subject of his complete submission were on a very large scale; but as day after day went by and still he held aloof, and showed no symptoms of penitence, nor any desire to return to his former allegiance, her heart died within her. She would now be content with a very moderate amount of humiliation, and was perfectly ready—nay, eager to meet him half-way—but surely he could not expect the first advances to come from her. Vainly had she struggled to forget him, to live in a whirl of abstracting gaities, to give herself no time for thought, and to endeavour to feel some interest in the existence of other men. It was quite useless; the mere fact of catching a sudden glimpse of him in the Row—of seeing the back of his head in a theatre—increased her pulse and colour in a very perceptible degree.

"There was no one like him," she declared to herself. Not one among the myriad admirers of her present palmy days was half so pleasing to her eyes and fancy as the lover who had cast her off with contumely and contempt.

The breach between them seemed daily widening; his name was never mentioned in her aunt's house, and his friends were apparently not her friends. Perhaps he was too overwhelmed with regret and confusion to venture to approach her—thus whispered hope, who ever told a flattering tale! Perhaps, as Mahomet was not inclined to come to the mountain, the mountain had better exert herself; and with this idea fresh in her mind she suddenly opened the subject to her cousin Blanche, who was the most affectionate and sympathetic of girls. Blanche was spending the afternoon with her, and engaged in the congenial task of turning over and criticizing the latest additions to Helen's wardrobe. Two or three lovely gowns lay on the bed and were undergoing a searching inspection, whilst their owner sat in a low chair at an open window, looking out ostensibly at some Italian singers, but, in reality, making up her mind to speak on the all-absorbing topic, and trying to bring her courage to the sticking point.

"I must say Madame Panier has an awfully good cut!" said Blanche, breaking the silence. "I don't know anyone that puts in a sleeve as well as she does! How much did she charge you for this blue dress, Helen?"

"Oh!" returned Helen, dreamily, "the blue one, I'm not quite sure; it was not very outrageous, I know. By-the-way, Blanche," avoiding her cousin's all-searching, grey eyes, "do you ever see anything of your cousin Rupert now?"

"Rupert!" echoed Blanche, in a key of animated surprise. "Oh, yes! I see him often! But why do you ask?" she concluded, with biting emphasis.

"Oh! merely because we were such friends once, and—and," stammering pitifully, "I thought perhaps he would have liked to renew our acquaintance now that I am established as a sort of connection—a cousin's cousin," with a miserable attempt at mirth.

"So you are!" cried Blanche, sitting down on an ottoman, and making up her mind to disabuse her companion's mind of any lingering *tendresse* in the direction of the gentleman in question. "I daresay it seems odd that you have never met, but I believe I know the reason that Rupert avoids you so persistently!"

"Avoids me!" repeated Helen, with rising colour.

"Yes, dear! To be quite frank with you, he flies from you like the plague! He feels that he, like all of us, behaved miserably! It does not bear to be spoken about—and, indeed, it did not; and, to tell you the truth, though you would never have guessed it, Rupert is a little tiny bit narrow-minded, and cannot endure to feel small. Every time he sees

you, you remind him of an unpleasant event in the past—an event which he is trying to forget as fast as ever he can, in the society of Miss Ring!"

"And who is Miss Ring?" asked Helen, in a low voice, and with averted eyes.

"She is a girl that is rather fast, and not a bit what you would call his style; but she has lots of money—a *nouveau riche*; and not at all averse to being Lady Lynn! Rupert paid her no end of attention last season. Then came his little interlude with you; and now he is making the running again at such a pace that there will be a wedding at St. George's before we know where we are!"

"Really!" said Helen, making a valiant attempt to steady her voice; "I don't think I know her appearance. What is she like?"

"Oh! she *thinks* she is like Lady Dudley, but she is no more like her than I am! She is always well turned out, wears a tremendous fringe, has a pair of very sharp, dark eyes, and a fearfully squeezed-in waist! You may have seen her riding in the park. She wears a green habit, and rides a bright, bay horse, with white stockings. She is very noisy, and you can hear her laughing half-a-mile off!"

Yes, Helen recognised the young lady now by this flattering description. She was the girl she had seen talking to Rupert in the lobby of the opera house, a girl with bare shoulders and bold eyes. She had seen her more than once riding with him in the Row.

Jealously and mistrust are fires that kindle easily when blown by the bellows of neglect and lighted by the match of indignation.

Helen felt her pride come to her aid as she drew up her long, white throat and turned to her cousin, who was leaning back with her head resting against the bottom of the bed, and watching with half-closed, malicious eyes the effect of the missile she had launched—a *rival*!

"And when is the wedding to be?" asked Helen, with much composure.

"Oh! I really don't know that anything is positively fixed! I should not wonder if it was postponed till after Rupert's return. He talks of going on an expedition—a shooting trip to South America—with his friend, Captain Torrens."

"I suppose you will all be very glad when he is married and settled down near you for life!" remarked Helen, dealing an unintentional but smarting wound in her turn.

"Yes!" replied Blanche, with a swift, suspicious glance; "it is really quite time for him to give up wandering about the world, especially now that he is tolerably well off, and can afford to inhabit his ancestral halls. It is really a sin to see Cargew shut up. I dare say, if you particularly wished it, and made a point of it, he would come and pay you a visit!" she added, slowly. "Shall I sound him?" she asked, confidentially.

"On no account!" cried Helen, springing to her feet. That Blanche should offer in this patronising manner to bring her recreant lover reluctantly into her presence was an idea that was more galling than could be described!

"Why not? He can only say no!" continued Miss Despard, encouragingly.

"For many reasons!" returned Helen, who was leaning against the window (and looking out and seeing nothing) with hot anger in her heart, and a choking sensation in her throat. "One will be sufficient, I daresay; and that is—"

"Yes, and that is!" echoed Blanche, eagerly.

"That"—turning slowly round, and confronting her companion—"that I should decline to see him!"

"Oh! really!" opening her orbs in wide-eyed surprise; "I thought from your manner at first that you quite wanted to kiss and be friends!" rising, and walking over to the glass, and rearranging the front of her fine fringe with little complacent pats of her jewelled fingers.

"Then you thought wrong!" said Helen,

ungrammatically, and moving towards the door.

"Now I am sure it is tea time, and I am dying for a cup of tea. Come downstairs. I have no doubt that Mrs. Towers thinks by this time we must have settled all the affairs of the nation!"

They had settled a good deal, had Helen but known.

That evening Miss Despard sent a delicate note on thick, grey paper, and written in a broad, black hand, to Sir Rupert's club.

Looking over his shoulder, we read it, too, and this is what it said:—

"DEAR RUPERT,—

"I had a long talk with Helen to-day, and brought you on the *tapis* in the most diplomatic manner; but all my good offices were of no avail. She will never forgive you; and said that were you to call on her at any time she would decline to see you; so I have spared you the humiliation of the snub direct! Come and dine with us to-morrow night, and talk over the whole affair with your affectionate cousin, BLANCHE."

(To be continued.)

## BROWN AS A BERRY.

### CHAPTER XIII. (continued.)

CAPTAIN CAREW turns and lights a cigar with a subdued smile on his face. The brief bright flame shows him to be a singularly handsome man, with deep blue eyes that, though dark, are several shades lighter than are ordinarily seen with such raven black hair and olive complexion. Eyes "put in with a smutty finger," as they say in Ireland, which is also the land of his birth, as anyone might guess from a certain richness in his voice, which must not be confounded with the brogue; and an impulsiveness in his movements and speech, that the colder-mannered English seldom if ever possess.

A man who has lived for over thirty years in a world which has flattered and flouted him by turns, as fortune favoured him or frowned; and with a strength legibly written both in features and form, that denotes him to have been alike indifferent to either, though capable of battling with any adverse fate that might have threatened.

Perhaps the secret of this indifference and strength of purpose is, that his affections have never been sufficiently touched to make him weak. His parents being dead, he had been brought up by distant relations, who, while doing their whole duty towards him, had certainly done nothing more. Afterwards, when he had been old enough for other love to enter his life, he had not cared to pursue

"The light that lies  
In woman's eyes."

And the only romance in which he had as yet acted a part had not been of his own seeking, and had soon found an end. He had been in India now some years, and had been in no danger of losing a heart there, which he had kept free among the fairer women at home.

Perhaps the memory of the girl who had loved him, and whom he had not loved, was sufficiently strong to serve him as a safeguard against other wiles, for memory is often more powerful in its softening influence than the thing which it keeps alive.

Now, for the first time, he is interested in a woman's ways, and finds something infinitely attractive in them—so attractive, in fact, that he lingers on deck smoking and thinking until the sharp ring of a bell denotes it is eleven o'clock, and all the ship's lights are to be extinguished.

Berry is domiciled in the "horse-box" with a quartermaster's wife, and the bride of a young subaltern whose united ages would not make two-score years. Girl-like, Berry is taken with them on this account, and is glad that she is not placed with Mrs. Sowerby,

where, if she had more air and room, she would also have less peace and comfort.

The quartermaster's wife a middle-aged kindly woman, interfering little with her companions, is already asleep when Berry goes into the cabin. The bride is whispering a protracted good-night to her husband on the big-cushioned seats outside, and the low monotonous come in through the open window with a soft soothing sound.

By-and-by a heavy tread comes along the passage; and a voice she knows, but has heard for the first time that evening, says a careless good-night, which, combined with the answering greeting, sends a warm flush to Berry's pillowed cheek.

"Good-night, Carew. Where have you been hiding yourself to-night?"

Captain Carew gives a home-thrust in reply, that makes the bridegroom laugh, and the bride run blushing into the cabin. The two men pass on together, and presently all is so quiet and peacefully still that Berry falls asleep.

### CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning finds fewer people at the breakfast-table than had dined together the night before. The sea, though comparatively smooth still, has already found out its easiest victims and laid them low, and many others find it difficult at first to conform to the unaccustomed punctuality of a ship's routine.

Mrs. Sowerby is one of those who are absent, and from her husband Berry hears a piteous tale of the night she has had with herself and children all ill, and both her nurses obstinately expressing their determination to do nothing until the dreadful rolling has ceased, or until custom has enabled them to bear it better.

Confused cries and groans are coming from the nursery, and Berry congratulates herself afresh that she has not been placed in its close vicinity, knowing well that her friend would not be likely to have spared her in her need.

"I will take the children on deck, directly breakfast is over!" she says, feeling a little compunction at her selfish thought.

Captain Sowerby declares his gratitude to her, and his disapproval of the food placed before him, in a breath; and turning to tell a waiter behind him his opinion of the latter in no measured terms, leaves Berry at leisure to look round.

At the first glance she sees that Captain Carew is no longer a near neighbour, but has taken his seat among the bachelors at another table. She is not utterly devoid of cavaliers, however, for Mr. Le Sage is still there; and even as in her heart she is regretting the absence of last night's acquaintance, a tall, broad-shouldered man in cavalry uniform puts his leg over the form and seats himself beside her.

It is evidently not decreed that she shall be in lack of lovers during the voyage. The newcomer, though he does not speak, has a keen eye to her requirements, for each time she is in want of anything a big brown hand is stretched out and unostentatiously procures it for her. She does not dare to raise her eyes to his face, but, as the meal goes on, she feels as though she were the heroine of one of her favourite fairy-tales—as though she were in an enchanted castle, and spirit hands with invisible bodies were ministering to her wishes.

She is glad when Captain Sowerby moves, and by rising with him she can break the spell. She does not lift her eyes until she has passed the whole length of the tables and made good her escape into the ladies' cabin. There she finds Mrs. Sowerby in bed, very fretful over what she deems her ill-usage, and surrounded by her children, who are divided between quarrelling and crying.

"Let me take them away, and you will get some sleep," says Berry, after duly expressing her sympathy with the poor woman's really pitiable condition.

"Thank you, dear! thank you very much.

So unfortunate that we are not nearer to each other. It would be far nicer for both."

Berry utters a polite reply, that is nevertheless not an assent; and is glad when she can escape on deck, in spite of the fact that three children in various stages of discontent are clinging to her skirts.

The air is keen at first, and a fresh salt spray is blowing up, that must invigorate anyone even against their will; and presently Berry is engaged in a romp that scandalizes a group of matrons who have already gathered together and got friendly over gossip, and a few less agile maidens who have too much self-consciousness to dare to attempt any innovation on the ceaseless pacing up and down, which, however monotonous it may be, is at any rate correct.

But if the women look askance, the men are more inclined to admire than condemn. Several glances follow her with interest as she darts to and fro, the children in pursuit, and her laughter ringing out as free and unconcerned as theirs.

By common consent the part of the deck they have chosen for their games is left clear, and not until Berry has sank exhausted on a seat, and the little ones cluster round her for a story, does anyone attempt to join her. Then it is Captain Carew, who comes leisurely up and would have spoken, but at that moment another man approaches from the opposite direction.

It is Berry's friend of the breakfast-table, and some instinct of mischief seizes her as they both stand talking within earshot.

The children have asked her for a tale—a fairy-tale—and with a little toss of her head, she begins the story of the White Cat. Her voice falters a little when she gets to the castle where the prince is waited upon by invisible servants whose hands only are seen as they provide him with everything he could possibly require. She goes on, however, boldly, notwithstanding that she is sensible of the scrutiny of a pair of dark eyes, and knows that both men are listening to every word she says.

"Were they good fairies, Berry?" asks six-year-old Paul, when she had finished.

"Oh, yes! Good fairies, of course. They fed the poor prince when he was hungry, and laid him in a beautiful bed when he was tired; and sent him away next day with lovely presents for all his little brothers and sisters at home."

"Are there any fairies now?" anxiously.

Berry shakes her head.

"Not even in this ship?" asks Paul, again, being vividly impressed with this new experience of life out-of-doors and out-of sight of land.

"Not good ones," she returns, with wicked intent.

"Mc'don't love bad fairies," lisps baby Ethel on her knee.

"No, more do I," agrees Berry, decidedly.

The stranger passes on with a shrug of his broad shoulders, and Captain Carew drops on the seat beside her.

"What a lovely day!" is his opening remark; but Berry, smitten suddenly with a sense of her indiscretion, blushes vehemently and cannot bring out a coherent reply.

She loosens the deep fur cape from her shoulders, and with it a fading hot-house rose—one of those John Holmes had given her the day before—and lays them down beside her.

"It is very hot," she says, uncomfortably, at last, when he does not volunteer any other subject of conversation.

"I cannot say I find it so," with a slight smile; "but then I am one of those who look confidently for snow in winter and roses in summer, having no vivid imagination."

"And when the seasons are reversed?"

"Of course one must be prepared for casualties; one must be sometimes wrong—it is a feather in one's cap to be sometimes right."

"You are very philosophical!"

"No, I only try to be so. Often I feel absurdly disappointed at the keen east wind

which blows on a bright spring day, or the early frost that comes in an autumn, even a summer night."

"At least this weather is reasonable," says Berry, absently, her thoughts busy over her foolishness in establishing an understanding with a perfect stranger, whose name she does not even know; and who certainly has not betrayed any undue bashfulness in his conduct towards her. Feeling so utterly to blame, she loses all right to resent it, too, and can only wonder where her thoughtlessness will lead.

"Yes, it is cold enough; as cold as only an English January can be."

Berry assents; and then Carew knows what he has before suspected, that the heat of which she had spoken a few moments back, had been caused by confusion and not by any sudden change in the temperature. He wonders, with a little unaccountable excitement, whether it was his presence which could account for it, and if so, why? The question involves so many bewildering replies that he pulls himself up sharp and will pursue the subject no longer.

"Put on your cape again. You will catch cold if you stay without it!" he suggests gently.

It is partly the air of proprietorship in his tone, and partly a sense of having contradicted himself so glaringly, that makes the girl flush crimson and turn away her face.

"It was romping with the children made me hot," she explains, apologetically.

"Of course!" gravely.

She allows him to place the cape on her shoulders, and obediently fastens it as told; but when he hands her the already faded rose, she waives it aside.

"No, not that. It is dead already!" she says hastily, and as quickly repents her words, fearing that it may seem as though she had purposely given an opening for sentimental speech or deed; after her late escapade she is doubly sensitive as to the constructions that might be placed on even the most innocent act.

But he reassures her by placing the flower on the seat without remark, and she likes him the better that he does not attempt to avail himself of what he might justly have deemed an opportunity.

"A rose in winter is to me only a pathetic, not a lovely sight," he observes, simply. "It's life a forced one, reared in an artificial atmosphere—it's death a cruel one, directly it is exposed to the real outside air. I detest all incongruities!"

But after, when she is gone, his coolness and composure to a certain extent desert him. It was easier to talk commonplace in her presence, for he has never been one to wear his heart upon his sleeve; but now that he is alone, the dead flower lying there seems to appeal powerfully to his sympathy. The idea that it might be swept away, trampled on, or, worse still, picked up by careless unknowing fingers, affects him strangely, and with indignant haste he stoops and takes it in his hand.

Half-amused, half-amazed at his own movement, he holds it irresolutely, wondering what to do next. To place it in his pocket-book would be a sign of weakness utterly foreign to his nature, to throw it away again requires more strength than he possesses. He hesitates; and then with the tenderness of one who commits the body of a loved child to the grave, he drops it gently overboard and watches it float away on the waves.

There is only one witness to what he has done, and that is the stranger who had noticed Berry that morning, and whose incipient admiration, already heightened by the girl's coquetry, now gains fresh impetus from the fact of rivalry.

He laughs a little contemptuously, and, tossing away his cigar, strolls below to find out the names and antecedents of those who are to play subordinate parts in the drama he contemplates enacting for the purpose of ameliorating the tediousness of a long voyage by sea.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE Honourable Spencer Blythe is a man famous for his conquests, notorious for his abuse of them. Where he is best known, his attentions are considered to compromise any woman who is unlucky enough to attract him; and so impervious is he to rebuff, that often those who would willingly dispense with his notice receive unmerited reprobation.

He himself rather glories in his evil character. It amuses him to see the flutter of dismay his adventures arouse among the chaperones, and the ill-concealed jealousy of the husbands whose trust in their wives is not unconditional. And, as a rule, it is these last who have most to fear; for Mr. Blythe seldom condescends to the bread-and-butter misuses of society, unless they have some unusual piquancy to recommend them—which, perhaps, fortunately for them, is not often the case.

Berry's reception of his opening civilities, piques and interests him, and her subsequent flight at what she has done only makes him smile, and resolve more decidedly to go on with the game. He, of all men, well knows how entirely a single indiscretion can put a girl in a man's power, and he is not one to forego his advantages or to give her credit for the childish thoughtlessness which alone prompted it.

At luncheon he does not address her, and this reassures her, notwithstanding that he still makes a point of reaching her each thing as she requires it, rendering the position of the waiter behind her almost a sinecure.

The afternoon she spends with Mrs. Sowerby; but in the evening, when she goes into dinner, she feels a little dismay at seeing Captain Sowerby in friendly discourse with the stranger. The next moment he is introduced to her, and his meaning smile, as he bows in acknowledgment, makes her regret more than ever her mistake in putting herself so at his mercy. Instinctively she feels she will not receive much grace at his hands.

"Pussy's attendant must not be less vigilant in her service now that he has received a name and an identity," he remarks, smiling, and striving to win an answering glance from the demure little face bent so intently over her soup-plate.

"I do not understand you," coldly.

"Then your memory is a short one for the fairy-tales you tell!"

"I daresay; I do not pretend to any talent that way."

"Of course you do not pretend anything; ladies never do," with an almost imperceptible sneer; but slight as it is Berry detects it, and flashes a deeper, angrier crimson.

Captain Carew, watching her from another table, wonders what could have been said to cause the brilliant colour which gives to the varying face its only lacking charm, the bared throat and arms of creamy whiteness making it more conspicuous still. Mr. Blythe, too, is not slow to admire, and grows more ardent still in his proposed pursuit. That she should treat him with disdain only adds to his eagerness; a speedy success has little excitement in it, and he prefers beginning with a little aversion.

"It is your first visit to India?" he goes on questioningly, as she does not reply.

"Yes," laconically.

"If you take such glowing cheeks there you will find yourself in disgrace. A committee of pasty-faced ladies will sit upon you at once and condemn you without a hearing."

"India is a queer place if personalities are indulged in in there—and approved."

"India is a queer place," answers, calmly, evading what was meant as a rebuke.

"And the people?" with an involuntary smile at his own frolic.

"People are the same everywhere, I suppose. Perhaps they are a little fonder of gaiety, scandal, and the other ills to which our flesh is heir."

"Not a glowing account."

"If you want that you must go to someone

younger and more enthusiastic. I have outlived my illusions."

"Then I am sorry for you," decidedly.

"Thank you very much. You mean that no amount of knowledge acquired can compensate one for the disappointment that is gained with it?"

"Yes, that is what I meant, but I don't think I could have expressed it so well."

"You do yourself an injustice. I am confident you could do anything, even to remembering the fairy tale you told this morning."

The malicious smile which accompanies this makes Berry draw up her little head in proud silence. She had been thawing to him before, but freezes again at this fresh allusion to what she wishes to forget.

"Captain Sowerby," turning to her other neighbour, "is not the band playing very loudly to-night?"

Captain Sowerby assents, protesting he is almost deafened by the sounds, which, in point of fact, are less obtrusive than they had been the night before; but then civilization has its demands, and necessitates the exchange of many meaningless sentences.

Mr. Blythe who is not soon abashed goes on easily,—

"Do you know I was interested in your story? All fairy tales have a great attraction for me, and, of course, especially yours. I—I am so fond of cats!"

He looks so droll as he says this, and so unlike anyone who would in reality possess the tastes he had professed, that Berry laughs, and then inconsequently flies into a passion with him for having made her lose her standing-point of dignified disapprobation.

"Why do you tease me so? If you will persist in mentioning it I"—she says, with a queer mixture of childish wrath and womanly indignation—"I will never speak to you again!"

He is grave instantly.

"Agreed; let it be a bond between us, a secret not to be divulged," he murmurs, with a degree of familiarity that maddens the girl still more as she cannot reasonably object to what she has herself proposed. She has gone deeper and deeper into the mire, and the bold, brown eyes which rested admiringly upon her tell her plainly that he knows it. To have a private understanding with an acquaintance of a few hours; how much lower is she to fall?

She pushes away her desert plate and rises from the table.

"I am going on deck," curtly.

"I will follow you there," politely.

"I did not mean that," with an angry push past him; and the bow and whispered assurance that he had not ventured to put so flattering a construction on her speech are alike unseen and unheard, for she is gone like the wind, without even a glance behind.

Captain Carew still watching them both furtively, makes an angry movement, as though to go after her; but when he sees Mr. Blythe take his place again, and order another bottle of wine, he knows there is no necessity for his presence, and sinks back again into his chair, careful not to make her exit more noticed than it already is.

When he strolls up on deck a quarter-of-an-hour later, he finds her leaning against the side of the vessel and looking up into the sky, which to-night is lighted by such myriads of stars, and so bright a moon, that the expression of her face is as clearly seen as though it were noonday. The eyes a little sad, as though her thoughts now were with the past; her lips a little stern, with some present vexation that she cannot at once cast off; and yet a depth of natural brightness over all which it seems no sorrow could effectually dispel. Captain Carew thinks it the prettiest face he has ever seen, and feels horribly inclined to tell her so.

"It is a lovely night!" he begins, substituting a very common-place remark for the one which, though as obvious, would have been certainly more disconcerting.

She starts, and turns round.

"Is it you? I am glad—"

She had meant to express her pleasure that it is not her tormentor of the dinner-table who has joined her; but, suddenly thinking better of it, leaves the sentence in its flattering incompleteness. He is, and looks, more pleased than yesterday he would have believed any woman's words could have made him.

"Yes, it is I! If you will let me sit here I promise not to disturb your reverie!"

"My reverie is best disturbed; it was not a pleasant one!"

"Not! Looking at you I can scarcely credit that," with a smiling, disbelieving glance, as he seats himself beside her.

Berry pouts discontentedly.

"I know what you mean. You think I am too young to have a trouble or a care; you think—"

"I think both troubles and cares are chiefly fanciful as yet," still smiling.

She touches her black dress expressively.

"I am an orphan!" she says, simply.

"I beg your pardon; I ought to have thought of that, seeing your black frock. And the loss is fresh to you still, and very bitter of course!" he says, with quick remorse.

Berry, hating a suspicion even of false sentiment, and knowing that it was more horror than sorrow she felt at her father's death interposes hastily.

"My mother died too long ago for me to know what I have lost. And—and I do not like to speak of the rest."

He changes the subject at once, but to Berry the new topic he chooses is scarcely more welcome.

"Mr. Blythe—have you known him before?" he questions, curiously.

"No—oh, no! Why do you ask?"

"I am afraid you would call it presumption on my part if I answered you."

"You cantry! I will not promise forgiveness, but a fault confessed is half expiated, you know!" with a bright, upward glance, which makes the man think that grey eyes are sweeter and more expressive than any others which Providence has given women to beguile his sex.

"It is only that I would like to put you on your guard against him. He is not exactly the sort of man I would introduce to my sisters—if I had any."

"Why?" with feminine curiosity, and feeling something of that interest even pure women do feel for the black sheep that is marked dangerous.

"Forgive me; I would rather not say. I do not like speaking against a man who, if not a friend exactly, is an acquaintance of some years' standing."

"You think a veiled innuendo is safer, perhaps?" says Berry, sharply, perversely inclined to take the part of the accused.

"It was for your sake I spoke!" reproachfully.

"I know; and I am very ungrateful. Please forget what I said!" holding out her hand frankly.

He takes it, and is slow to let it go. The little warm fingers lie so trustingly in his, without a flutter or a thought of anything unusual in the action.

"There was no need to warn me. I hate him!" she says, confidentially.

Her hand is relinquished so suddenly that she starts, and turns to see why no comment has been made on the remark which instinctively she knows must have given pleasure.

It is Mr. Blythe who, with the evident intention of interrupting their *à-die*, comes leisurely towards them, and stays the expression of satisfaction which has been on Captain Carew's lips.

Berry jumps to her feet.

"Don't let me think that I am disturbing you," says the new comer, languidly, "or I will go away!"

"Go!" is on the tip of Berry's tongue, but she substitutes for it the conventional phrase, "Not at all," and shoots such a fierce glance

at his dark, smiling face, that a man less bold and determined might have accepted its obvious meaning and retired. But not so has the Hon. Spencer Blythe obtained and kept his character for unscrupulousness and irresistibility.

"Then, if I am really not in the way, I will stop and finish my cigar. You don't object to tobacco 'out-of-doors?' questioningly, and with a calmness ensured by the knowledge that what he is smoking is the most delicate and fragrant weed that money can procure.

"Not at all!" says Berry, again; and then, turning to Captain Carew, "I am going below. Good-night!"

A dark scowl comes over Mr. Blythe's face at what he inwardly anathematizes as "the impudence of the child." He is so little accustomed to rebuff that it requires all his self-command to answer, smiling still,—

"Ah! then you are deceiving me, after all! You do object to smoking, and would not confess. If you have so little confidence in me, I shall feel justified in giving you a reason for your distrust. You cannot expect me to keep true to our agreement if you have no faith."

He has thrown away his cigar and now looks laughingly in her eyes, with a veiled menace in his glance, however, that is meant to warn. But Berry ignores him completely, and nodding another good-night to Captain Carew, walks quickly away.

A bow has fallen from her dress, a little scrap of black ribbon; but, insignificant as it is, the eyes of both men fall upon it, with something of the same triumphant gleam; but Captain Carew is the quicker, and before Berry has reached the top of the companion-ladder is at her side, holding it in his hand.

"It is your bow—you dropped it!" he says, giving it to her half-regretfully.

She takes it with such smiling thanks that he is emboldened to say more.

"Do not tempt me again!" he whispers, softly. "A flower first, then a bow; you must think I am St. Kevin himself. I warn you, the third time I shall not be so honest."

The little crimson glowing face is turned away in such pretty confusion, that, with one lingering pressure of the hand, in pity he releases her, and lets it go; but he stands some minutes gazing after her, unconscious of the smiling glances that are following his movements, or the dark, angry, yet half-contemptuous looks of the man whom for the present he seems to be successfully rivalling.

There is such a strange, new feeling in his heart that there is no room for any other sensation, not even hope, nor the fear that later on is inseparable from love.

## CHAPTER XVI.

BERRY'S lovers afford some amusement to the idlers on board who have no pressing affairs of their own to engage their attention. Before they reach Malta, speculation is already rife as to which is the favoured one, and bets are freely circulated among the more sporting part of the community, upon the likelihood of an engagement being announced before they arrive at Bombay.

Mr. Blythe has changed his tactics, and is more successful in his advances now. He is so penitent and reverential that Berry feels remorseful for her former rudeness, and strives to make amends by a quiet gentleness so foreign to her nature, that, had he known her better he might have taken alarm.

As it is, he only plumes himself upon his tact and infallible knowledge of the female character.

"If storming the citadel does not answer, one can always starve them into raising the siege. It is a mere question of time," he thinks to himself, complacently, blowing off a cloud of smoke from his cigar and watching it dreamily, as it rises in circles and then evaporates.

Captain Carew, who is standing not far off, looks at him with grave disapproval. He, too, has been a little deceived by Berry's altered manner, and the thought sometimes crosses his mind, that the hate of which she spoke must have soon been overcome, or else that it has never existed.

With him she is so bright and saucy that he cannot think it is a mask to hide her deeper thoughts, or that she avoids anything more serious because she is afraid of him—and of herself.

He has had so little intercourse with women that no wonder he is doubtful, and jealous of this man who looks so self-confident and secure in his own attractions. Fortune seems to be favouring the other, too, for Captain and Mrs. Sowerby both encourage his attentions, either for his supposed merits, or on account of that handle to his name which he has almost invariably found of service in the prosecution of his plans.

The ship is steaming slowly into port. Already a crowd of small boats surround it and try to land with their wares, the inevitable sponges, laces and corals, all the worst and dearest of their kind.

Presently Berry comes up, and, regardless of her two admirers, walks slowly across the deck and leans over the side. Simultaneously they stroll over and join her and simultaneously glance angrily at each other for so doing, but it is too late to retreat.

"Are you going on shore?" asks Captain Carew, rather aimlessly, seeing that landing at Malta is the one oasis in the voyage which reconciles the passengers to their fates.

"I believe I am to have the pleasure of escorting Mrs. Sowerby and Miss Scardale myself, so am in a position to answer your question in the affirmative," observes Mr. Blythe, with an undertone of triumph in his languid voice.

Berry turns round with something of her old sharpness.

"I wish you would call me by my right name, Mr. Blythe!"

"I did not dare," he answers, with gentle impertinence. "And yet it is such a sweet name—Berry!"

She is too indignant to explain, knowing that whatever she says he will turn to his own advantage. Bright and clever as she is, she is no match for this man, whose assurance carries him through much that mere talent for repartee could not accomplish. She turns her back to him and addresses Captain Carew.

"Come with us," she says, affably, "Captain Sowerby has some business, so will not be with us all the time, and three can never well walk together."

He accepts eagerly, and then as he murmurs his thanks a sudden misgiving comes upon him whether perhaps she does not mean him as an escort to Mrs. Sowerby to secure an uninterrupted  *tête-à-tête*  with his rival. But he dismisses the idea as unworthy.

"How slowly we move; I don't believe we shall be really in before luncheon," continues Berry, impatiently.

"You will be able to land in half-an-hour, if you wish!" he contradicts, smiling.

"I don't believe it!"

"Then back your opinion. Will you bet me a discretion?"

"I don't know what a discretion is!" very doubtfully.

"It is an article to be chosen at the discretion of the loser!"

"Rather a risk of course, and we should each have to trust a little to the generosity of the other!"

"Don't trust to anyone," puts in Mr. Blythe, lazily. "It never pays!"

"I am not a Jew, Mr. Blythe; and don't expect cent per cent."

"Then it is a bet?" asks Captain Carew, softly.

"Yes; it is a bet!"

She looks up at both men defiantly, as though challenging their possible disapprobation.

With all her faults and thoughtlessness Berry is not one whit fast, and has been driven into this, her first bet, by a perverse inclination to go against Mr. Blythe's advice. Besides, she is conscious that with Captain Carew she can safely venture more than with any other man would be expedient.

A woman's instinct is fortunately keen, and stands her in good stead where knowledge and experience fail.

Just then Captain Sowerby attracts her attention, and she goes over to his side. Mrs. Sowerby is there talking, and laughing at the persistence of the men in boats, who are trying to sell their wares even before they are allowed to go on deck.

Berry soon forgets all about her admirers in the interest this novel scene affords. The dark faces of the Maltese contrasted with their gaudy clothes; and the bright, golden oranges, which are their principal articles of sale, look very gay against the dark water; and the soldiers, who have had no communication with the outer world these last few days, relieve themselves now by a shout of *badinage* to and fro that, if not always refined, at least adds to the motley merriment. The ship is still moving on slowly, with its noisy satellites, when the luncheon bell rings, and Berry remembering, hastily pulls out her watch.

"You have won!" says Mr. Blythe, at her side. "I wish you would bet something with me!"

"No, thank you. My first experience is sufficient. I might not be so fortunate another time!" she answers, curtly.

But when she meets Captain Carew at the entrance of the saloon door she looks less composed, and very unwilling to abide by the consequences of her bet.

"Luncheon was a quarter-of-an-hour earlier to-day, so we have neither of us won!" she says, quickly.

"What a shameful evasion of your responsibilities," he answers, smiling. "They will never admit you into Tattersall's if you play fast and loose with your engagements like that!"

"I have no ambition that way. I—I don't approve of ladies betting!" with uneasy severity.

"Then I will not try to lead you into it again."

"And it is all right?" with a sigh of relief, for somehow she does not like accepting anything at his hands, more especially when it is gained thus.

"I don't know what you call all right! I cannot abandon my privileges this time, whatever I have promised for the future. You see a discretion is a peculiar sort of bet; the winner has nothing to say to it; everything is in the loser's hands, and I have a very strict code of honour about these things," gravely.

"I think you are very unfair."

"Don't say that, please."

"Unkind, then. Why should you force me into a false position like this?" half angrily.

"Because it is such a pleasure to give you anything; because it is my dearest wish to give you all that I have in the world."

But Berry has gone before he can say more. In the one startled glance she had time to give she had read something of the truth in his earnest eyes, and with the wild timidity of a startled fawn flies before he can tell the rest.

He follows her through the swinging doors, hoping the best from her confusion and nothing loth at the delay. A public passage is scarcely the place for a declaration, and, besides, he is perhaps not unwilling to keep his liberty a little longer. That final forfeiting of all, from which there is no going back, is always a wrench to the masculine mind. What is lost by it is well understood; what gained a problem only the future can solve.

Captain Carew, who has never been subject to female influence before, shrinks a little from this leap into the unknown, and feels it almost a relieve.

Perhaps it is as well that women with their

quick impulses, and their reckless willingness to risk everything at the call of love, cannot always know the thoughts in their lover's minds. They would have small patience with the *pros* and *cons* that are calmly argued out; and would not believe in a love that, in their idea, such caution must chill if not destroy.

Meanwhile Berry eats her luncheon as in a dream, and when at last it is over, and the boats are waiting to take them on shore, she keeps close by Mrs. Sowerby, and effectually prevents the approach of anyone else by adopting a confidential tone that the subjects on which she is conversing do not exactly justify. Mrs. Sowerby looks at her in some bewilderment. She has never fathomed the character of the girl who, for the time being, is under her charge, nor is she ever likely to do so. She can only hope that it will all end for the best, and that she may be able some day to lay claim to having had the honour of chaperoning the future Lady Blythewood during the time the courtship was progressing. Who knows, too, that Berry may feel gratitude for her assistance, and repay her by an invitation to stay at Castle Blythewood!

As these Chateaux d'Espagne are built in her brain, the woman's pale cheeks flush, and her dim eyes brighten—forgetting for the time the cruel shifts of poverty and her burden of little children, all unprovided for, in the brilliant prospect of the glories that may await her in the success of another. So deep is she in thoughts that for some time she does not notice Berry has dropped behind with Captain Carew, and that the mainstay of her cast-a-building is walking rather ruefully at her side.

She gives a start, and comes at once to earth, seeing her hopes in danger of being wrecked.

To walk four abreast in those narrow streets is impossible, and she has no reasonable excuse for breaking up the *tête-à-tête*. She can only keep addressing Berry every other minute, and thus prevent the distance widening between them. And the girl seconds her efforts, feeling a new shyness, and only too glad to escape from it by a general conversation. The afternoon passes quickly in shopping and looking over the palace and the wonderful old church, St. John's; finishing up by eating ices and drinking chocolate at a funny little shop with which both men have an old acquaintance from having several times landed, going to-and-fro between England and India. They at last returned on board ship to dress for dinner and the opera. In these arrangements, Mrs. Sowerby full of a new fear only half allayed by Berry's persistent impartiality during the afternoon, does not include Captain Carew. He manages, however, to catch Berry for a moment in the saloon, ready to start; her little white cloak and hood, with swansdown border, drawn closely round her, and fluttering a big black fan.

It is the first time he has seen her in anything but rigid black, and she looks so sweet and babylike that he feels inclined to take up that morning's subject where he left it off. But his half-formed design is speedily frustrated, for in her fright at what she thinks is near, she adopts a cold, preoccupied air that anyone as sensitive as Captain Carew could not mistake or ignore.

"Are you waiting for Mrs. Sowerby?" he begins, hesitatingly.

"Yes, it is very late! We ought to be starting now!"

"I shall see you at the opera!"

"I suppose so, unless the house is very large."

"It would be a very, very large house indeed, in which I could not find you. Don't fancy you could hide yourself from me so easily!"

"I have no wish to play bo-peep, Captain Carew," she says, indifferently.

"Let me put my mark upon you, and then there will be no fear of your being lost to me for long," he answers, audaciously, and with

a sudden quick movement, for which she is not prepared, clasps something round her neck.

For a wonder the saloon is empty, and no one is there to see but a steward at the other end, who is too busy and too uninterested to notice what is going on; but just as she puts up her hands with an indignant movement to displace whatever is there, the door of the ladies' cabin is opened, and Mrs. Sowerby sails in.

"Now, Berry, are you ready?" she asks, crossly, as she looks around for Mr. Blythe in vain.

"Quite; I have been waiting."

The girl is fumbling still at her neck; but Captain Carew bends down under pretence of moving a chair from her way, and manages to whisper,—

"Leave it there, it was an agreement, and you have no right to break your word."

Her face flushes rebelliously, but her hand falls obediently to her side.

Mr. Blythe joins them, with Captain Sowerby, and together they go down to the boat. It is a fine night, only inasmuch as there is no rain. There is a cold wind blowing, and no moon nor stars. In the darkness Berry furtively puts up her hand to her throat to guess what it is has been fastened on to it like a manacle, a symbol of the slavery to which a woman must always submit when she loves a strong-willed man.

They dine in the coffee-room of an hotel, and at first Berry is so busy scanning the numerous strange faces (for several men-of-war are lying in the harbour) that she forgets what has happened. Then Mrs. Sowerby recalls it to her mind.

"Are you going to adopt the Eastern idea that colours may be worn in mourning?" she asks, with a slight accent of reproof.

"I—I don't understand," is the stammered reply.

"The beads you are wearing, they are very pretty, you know, but a little incongruous with crapes, don't you think?"

"I will take them off," eagerly.

"No, don't do that now. It would be a pity, they suit you so well. Red is quite your colour!"

"Red!" echoes Berry aghast.

"Yes, quite red. Pink coral is more fashionable I suppose, but I always preferred the other. No! don't take it off, silly child. It looks so well with black, does it not, Mr. Blythe?"

"It is charming," is the prompt reply.

"Miss Berry is always charming," declares Captain Sowerby, warned into momentary enthusiasm by the bright blushing face by his side.

And Berry desists from her useless efforts. The clasp is stiff, and she does not know how it goes; besides, she feels unwilling to disobey the giver's wish. The worst is over now; no one else is likely to notice what she is wearing, or at least draw attention to it in her presence. She resigns herself to her fate, with a little relieved sigh; the beads to her excited fancy seeming to caress and clasp her neck like the hand of a friend, or lover.

The opera-house is full that night, but even in the first rapid glance round, Berry sees where Captain Carew is sitting, and is glad that his gaze meets hers at once, as though he had been anxiously waiting for her coming. In her sudden joy she smiles and touches her neck with her tiny mittened fingers.

It is the first direct encouragement she has given him, and his heart beats so high in response to it that he can scarcely restrain himself from joining her at once; and yet he knows that he could not be so near without betraying what is in his thoughts. The evening seems interminable. When the last song is over, and the final chorus thundered out, he goes quickly to the door to see her, and speak to her, if only one word. But by some mischance he misses her.

He hurries quickly through the noisy street, thickly peopled, still with the persevering Maltese who are loth to sleep while there is a chance

of making one more son out of their visitors. Steadily refusing all offers of guidance from the clamorous throng, he soon reaches the quay, and by lucky chance the boat Captain Sowerby has engaged is only just leaving the shore.

He steps in and takes his place—scarcely seen in the darkness—and quite content to sit silent listening to Berry's clear young voice, as she discusses the night's amusement and regrets its termination.

When they get alongside the transport he pushes forward to assist her up the ladder; but someone is before him, and in the light of a lantern, which is flashed down from the ships' side, he can clearly distinguish the face and figure of Spencer Blythe.

One hand holds hers as she steps cautiously on to the lowest rung of the narrow ladder, the other he lays audaciously on the snowy swansdown that borders her cashmere cloak. He stoops, too, and whispers something in her ear.

It is only one word; but on the hearer's heart it falls like a weight of lead, accompanied as it is by a caressing gesture.

"Pussy!"

And there is no word of rebuke.

The girl springs up the ladder with the speed and grace of an antelope, but Captain Carew cannot see her face, and there is nothing to tell him that the familiarity has been distasteful to her, or in any way resented.

(To be continued.)

## THE LILY AND THE ROSE.

### CHAPTER XIV.

LADY AVANLEY'S manners were always better than her morals, as Alice had already discovered; but on no occasion had the former struck the girl as so perfect as when, finding herself discovered, she advanced smiling and quite unembarrassed, and said, suavely,—

"My dear girl! you shouldn't gossip with the door ajar. You never know who may be listening outside."

Greta lifted her head with a sort of defiance.

"I am sure nobody would be so mean!"

"I am not at all sure! Servants have not the fine feelings we have. Besides, it is always better to be too prudent than just prudent enough. I pushed the door and walked in, and you did not hear me, so that even an honourable person might have caught a few words inadvertently, as I did."

"You forget, mamma, that a servant, or anyone but you, would have knocked."

"After she had heard all!"

"Why not before? Our conversation would not have been very interesting to outsiders."

"I don't know. Servants love a sensation, and your attitudes, both of you, savoured strongly of a scene. Your head was on Alice's shoulder in a very theatrical way, and she was assuring you of her undying sympathy, and praying for your happiness, et cetera. I have seen something very like it in some play, although I can't remember which!"

"Oh! mamma!" cried Greta, colouring hotly; "you turn everything into ridicule—even the most sacred feelings of human nature!"

"The sacred feelings of human nature are silent," she answered, significantly. "The troubles people can talk about are never very severe."

"I think if one could not talk about things sometimes one's heart would break," said Alice, simply and gravely.

Lady Avanley glanced at the fair, earnest young face, not with coldness only, but with actual dislike.

"That is quite a schoolgirl's sentiment!" she said at last, disdainfully.

"I have heard plenty of grown-up people say the same thing, Lady Avanley."

"Have you, really? They must have been grown-up people without any kind of reticence or proper pride, then!"

"I don't see that!" put in Greta, with a rebellious expression in her brown eyes—the first Lady Avanley had seen in her beautiful automaton. "Very few are quite independent of sympathy, like you."

"A little while ago you were, or pretended to be, Greta," observed Lady Avanley, sternly.

"I perceive a great change in you since your illness, but not for the better. You give me the idea of having been badly influenced of late!"

Greta perceived her mother's meaning, and that she wished to throw the blame of this upon Alice, and responded, quickly,—

"If there is any change, mamma, it is due to reflection—not to anybody's influence. When you are ill, and isolated from the rest, you have a good deal of time for thought, and you begin to see your mistakes and shortcomings, and try to amend them."

"It never occurred to you, I suppose, that I might be a better judge of your mistakes and shortcomings than you were yourself, being a trifle older and having seen just a little more of the world?" inquired Lady Avanley, with an accent of withering scorn.

"I know there are some subjects, mamma, on which you and I never can agree."

"In that case, which ought to sacrifice her opinions to the other—the mother or the daughter?"

"The daughter, of course, where there is no question of principle involved."

"It would be difficult to picture any mother advocating a sacrifice of this sort!" returned her ladyship, in a tone of superiority which placed Greta at a decided disadvantage. "But really this discussion is very unseemly, and will give your cousin a very poor idea of our breeding, Greta. We have never quarrelled before in our lives, and I hope this will be the last, as well as the first time." And so saying, she retired magnificently.

Alice had the delicacy to abstain from comment, but in her heart she trembled for Greta when the struggle came of which she had spoken just before her mother entered, and she had to resist the iron will of this haughty, inexorable woman.

A minute later the luncheon bell rang, and Alice hurried down. She expected to find Lady Avanley very cold and silent, but to her surprise she was peculiarly affable, and evidently exerted herself to remove the unpleasant impression left by her little difference with Greta. She even said when Cox had left the room, speaking in her most indulgent tone,—

"Greta seems still very nervous and excitable—don't you think so? I make every allowance for her, really, poor child! But it wouldn't do to let her see this, because she must rouse herself now, Dr. Lennox says, and she won't make the least effort by herself. I wish you would try and impress this on her mind, Alice."

"I have told her so, Lady Avanley, and I think after the first effort has been made she won't mind. But she is weak still, and dreads the exertion."

"I suppose it is that," answered her ladyship. "We must take care she has a quiet afternoon, and then I think she will find herself better for the change, and not mind the little effort to-morrow."

Alice began to hope she had misjudged Lady Avanley a little when she drew her into the boudoir after luncheon, and showed her Greta's favourite couch drawn up to a blazing fire, and a little table beside it, on which were new books, a vase of fragrant violets, a bottle of salts, even the crimson screen, and said, with a satisfied smile,—

"I have made it look home-like, haven't I? Greta will forget she has ever been absent from us, and return easily and naturally to her old life."

She moved the table on one side as she spoke, threw the dainty coverlet over the back

of the couch, and then suggested they should fetch Greta.

"Us two together. She will like that best!" she added, with her sweet, though shallow laugh; "she wants so much hawmoring just now."

Greta was awaiting this summons, and seemed surprised at her mother's coming in person to fetch her, and also at her extreme graciousness. Perhaps she half-suspected some trap, but she was touched all the same, Alice could see, and she found herself wondering how it was she had thought her cousin so cold and heartless in the days gone by. She forgot that Greta had simply dropped her mark because she was too weak to hold it to her face.

Lady Avonley had pretended to feel sure nobody would come that afternoon, excepting Mrs. Melthorpe; but about five o'clock three carriages drove up to the door at short intervals, and then General Melthorpe rode up alone, his wife having been detained at home by visitors, and Greta could hear quite a Babel of tongues in the drawing-room, which was separated from the amber boudoir by a door, hidden by a thick curtain.

She did not detect the voice she dreaded amongst these, although she limped once or twice to this door, and listened intently. But when Alice brought her some tea presently she asked if Lord Darminster were there, and heard to her dismay that he had come in about ten minutes before with Sir Charles Avonley.

"Does he know I am downstairs?" inquired Greta, anxiously.

"I think not. He asked after you, and Lady Avonley simply said you were better."

"I shall be all in a tremble until he is gone," murmured Greta. "I am so afraid he will manage somehow to get in here."

"But Lady Avonley promised you should see no visitors to-day."

"Yes; only that man has such a terrible will!"

"Lady Avonley's is quite as strong, and if she does not choose he should come in he will stay where he is."

"But what if she should choose?"

"My dear Greta, she can't break her promise to you!"

Greta looked doubtful, but she said nothing, and Alice returned to the drawing-room. Lord Darminster, who was seated near the door, sprang to his feet as she entered, and said, significantly,—

"Greta is downstairs then?"

Alice nodded, and tried to pass on, but he barred her passage.

"Where?" he asked.

Alice would have told him the truth, after a conscientious habit she had; but, luckily for her, Lady Avonley heard what was going on, and hurried to the rescue.

"Greta is in the boudoir," she cried, gaily, "and no one passes that threshold excepting over my dead body! I promised her she should be quiet this afternoon, and I mean to keep my word!"

There was a resentful look on his lordship's face as he replied, in a significant tone,—

"You ought to make an exception in my favour under the circumstances!"

"Nonsense!" she said, laughing, with a certain triumph which awoke Alice's apprehensions. "You can see her to-morrow!"

"To-morrow is not to-day!"

"And to-morrow is not next week, you impatient man!"

"You know I can't bear being put off!" he lowered his voice to say.

She also lowered her voice to reply,—

"Rome was not built in a day! I have a difficult task before me, and if you hurry me everything will go wrong!"

"I don't see what is to be gained by keeping me out!" he muttered, angrily.

"But I do! and I know Greta better than you do!"

"Without understanding her so well, per-

haps! Some citadels have to be taken by storm, others by artifice!"

"And others only give in after a long siege!" put in her ladyship, archly; "and in this case, unless you enter by artifice or fraud, you remain a long while outside the gates!"

He tugged at his black moustache, a little habit Alice began already to associate with his evil mood.

"I think I might be left to judge of all this for myself!"

Lady Avonley's back was turned to the company at the other end of the long drawing-room, and her voice was almost a whisper as she rejoined, with decision,—

"It is no use our trying to work together if you undo in a minute what I have been days building up! I had the greatest difficulty in persuading Greta to come downstairs at all!"

"Humph!" interrupted the Earl. "I thought she was such an obedient daughter!"

"She has developed a will of late, which has to be conquered, of course, but by degrees. It would be most impolitic, and certainly defeat our ends, to hurry matters. Go and see Greta to-day, if you like; but I'll answer for it that if you do you will have reason to regret your precipitation!"

"Very well, then; I'll take myself out of temptation's way," he replied, and called across the room to Sir Charles.

"Are you going home yet, Avonley?"

"No, not yet," answered the young baronet, with his eyes fixed on Alice, who took care that not so much as a glance of hers should wander his way. "But you needn't stop on my account, for I'd rather walk!"

At this the earl made his adieux all round, and vanished, whilst Sir Charles edged his way diffidently up to Alice's chair, and bending forward, so as to gain a glimpse of the averted face, said, anxiously,—

"I begin to fear I must have offended you, Alice; you have not spoken a word to me all this afternoon!"

"I had nothing to say!" was the cold reply.

"When friends meet they generally find something to say to each other!"

"Yes, friends!" she retorted, with quiet significance; "but we are only cousins!"

"Only!" he echoed, reproachfully.

"Why not only?" she asked, looking him full in the face defiantly.

"Because you promised we should be friends too!"

"Did I?" she asked, wounding him to the quick by her apparent forgetfulness of a compact which was so dear to him.

"Your memory must be very short, Alice!" and his blue eyes were clouded and full of pain.

"I am afraid it isn't! I find there are a great many things I want to forget and can't!"

"I am surprised at that! You have forgotten me so very easily!"

"You are wrong there, Sir Charles; I remember you quite well."

"You remember my face, and who I am, but that is all."

"I remember, too, that you saved my life—and I recognise that you meant to do me a service—although it would have been far better for me if I had ended all my cares and troubles with my life that day."

"Alice! You pain me more than I can describe. What has happened to make you speak like this?"

"I have discovered what my ignorance hid from me before, that the world is full of lying and deception; and there is no one I can believe in, or trust."

"You evidently mean me to take some part of these strictures to myself, Alice; and yet, on my honour, I do not merit them, or understand what you mean. I want to be a true friend to you—and you repudiate me with scorn—and after having allowed me once to aspire to the title."

"I think your conscience ought to tell you why, Sir Charles."

"My conscience tells me nothing!"

"Then it can't be of much use to you."

"I am nothing to boast of, I know," he answered gravely; "but as yet it has not led me very far astray. You see I am answering all I understand of your accusation, Alice. It would be fairer and kinder both if you explained yourself fully, and gave me a chance of defending myself. You must know that in country places people have so little to talk about they generally malign their neighbours."

"I have never heard you malign," she said, coldly. "On the contrary, Mrs. Bennett speaks of you as if you were an angel."

Sir Charles coloured all over his fair, handsome boyish face.

"Of course she is partial; but if I were such a monster as you seem to think, Mrs. Bennett would surely have the sense not to praise me at all."

"She might be ignorant as well as partial."

"I see you are determined to think ill of me," he said, his temper rising a little.

"Why won't you be just, and tell me how I have offended you?"

"You have not offended me at all."

"You are pleased to be enigmatical. Why are you angry with me, if I have not offended you?"

"I am not angry with you, Sir Charles. I have no right to be. I am only pained and disappointed."

"Why?"

"Because I—I thought you what I find you are not," was the hesitating reply.

"Alice! this is very cruel. You seem to take a pleasure in torturing me."

"Oh! please, go away!" she urged in a low voice—having just caught a glance from Lady Avonley that warned her she was transgressing.

"People will wonder what we are talking about, and I have nothing more to say."

"Alice!" imperatively; "you owe me an explanation, and I will have it; if I come to the house, and demand to see you alone! Do you understand?"

"Yes," agitatedly; "only—"

"Am I to come and ask for you?"

"No! no!"

"Which do you mean? Yes or no?"

"No! Lady Avonley would be so angry."

"What does that matter? There can be no harm in my coming to see my cousin; and I will see you somehow, I give you fair notice. You have accused me, and must make good your accusation or withdraw it. That much, at any rate, I have a right to claim."

He looked so bold and manly and decided as he spoke that Alice felt her recreant heart returning fast to its allegiance, and was seized with a sudden fear lest he should guess the secret she would now have defended with her life.

"You had better write," she said, distressfully.

"One interview is worth twenty letters, Alice!"

"We will see; only go now, I beseech you, or let me pass!" for he was leaning forward in such a way that she could not move.

"You surely cannot wish to get me into trouble!"

Sir Charles rose then perforce; but his last words were,—

"I do not give in. I only wait!"

And he went to bid Lady Avonley adieu. When he came to Alice, in her turn, and held out his hand, she put her tremulous fingers into it because she could not help herself, but she dared not look into his face, for fear he should read the love in her eyes.

## CHAPTER XV.

"THANKS, my love, you see you haven't been disturbed at all!" said Lady Avonley, sweetly, as she joined her daughter in the boudoir when the last visitor was gone. "Could you have been quieter really in your own room?"

"I was always afraid someone would come."

"My dear!"—reproachfully—"I promised you no one should. Lord Darminster tried

very hard to make me alter my decision, as Alice can tell you; but I wouldn't give in."

"Thank you! He was the last person I should have cared to see."

"Poor man!" and her ladyship laughed lightly. "Fancy, after all his social successes, being actually snubbed by a little country girl who has seen nothing of the world!"

"It is very good discipline for him, mamma!"

"I dare say—and splendid policy; because of course it inflames his ardour!"

"I don't want to do that."

"Don't you, really?" she said, feigning incredulity.

"You know I have told you again and again how much I hate him!"

"But I never supposed you meant it!"

"Why not?"

"Because it does not seem possible you should. I was not at all susceptible as a girl; but I am quite sure I should have fallen headlong in love with Lord Darminster if he had paid me any attention!"

"And so swelled the list of his victims!"

"I dare say. Only I should have taken care he didn't know it."

"I can't see, myself, that Lord Darminster is so irresistible. His face is handsome, I dare say, but there is a look in his eyes that makes me shudder!"

"Most people think his eyes so very handsome!"

"I know; but they don't go in for expression. I like a good face much better than a handsome one."

"What do you mean by a good face? I pride myself upon being something of a physiognomist, and I must tell you, the most benevolent-looking man I ever saw had been guilty of two of the cruelest and most cold-blooded murders on record! Since that little mistake of mine I never talk of a good face, for I am satisfied it is impossible to tell people's character in this way!"

"Perhaps not; but a pleasant expression is a beauty!" persisted Greta.

"Undoubtedly. Only you mustn't allow yourself to suppose it indicates a beautiful character, that is all. And now I must go and dress," flinging the ball for Maria. "The Lowries are punctual people, and no one with any breeding keeps dinner waiting."

She moved off as she spoke, but stopped at the door to say most graciously,—

"Why don't you and Alice have your dinner cozily together in this room? Cox can bring in a table, and you can dispense with some of the usual formalities."

"That would be very nice!" Greta said, gratefully. "If you don't mind!"

"Of course I don't mind, and will give Cox his orders. There's a box of new books in the library Alice can open if she likes, and, probably, both of you will find something nice. *Adieu*!" and she kissed her finger-tips smilingly as she disappeared.

Alice began to understand Lady Avenley so well now, this extraordinary amiability frightened her, and made her wonder what was coming next. But it was as well, perhaps, she did not know—for no precautions could have saved her or any of them from the threatened evil.

That evening the two cousins would long remember, it was so calm and peaceful. They could hear the steady drip, drip of the rain amongst the evergreens outside; but, save this, everything was so still, the church clock solemnly tolling the hours and half-hours, travelled distinctly to them through the darkness, and made Greta look up from her book to say,—

"Don't you wish, sometimes, you were lying quietly in Aylesford churchyard, Alice, and all your troubles were over?"

"Yes," she answered, gravely. "I am afraid I do—but I know it is cowardly and wrong!"

"Where is the harm? I don't believe even that suicide is always a sin!"

"Oh! Greta," cried Alice, terribly shocked. "You must know it is a fearful sin!"

"As a rule, of course—but supposing I were married to a man I hated and despised, don't you think Heaven would forgive me if I threw myself on its mercy rather than endure the torture and humiliation of belonging to such a husband?"

"No; because no human creature could force you to marry a man you hated and despised!"

"Of course not—we were only supposing!"

"It is no use supposing impossible cases, Greta."

"They do just *pour papier le temps*," she answered, lightly, and went back to her book.

Another long spell of silence, and then Greta spoke again.

"How beautifully quiet it is," she said. "We must be going to have a storm."

"Why a storm?"

"I don't know; but this strange stillness in the air and round about us can only mean that."

"You are nervous to-night, dear, and full of fancies. The rain may come down a little faster presently, but that will be all."

"Into all lives some rain must fall—Some days be dark and dreary,"

quoted Greta, sighing. "I wish I were you, Alice!"

"Me?" incredulously. "You would soon want to change back to your old self again, Greta."

"I am sure I shouldn't. You are your own mistress at any rate."

"You forget that liberty has its drawbacks as well as its advantages, Greta. You wouldn't like to lose your mother."

"No, of course," impatiently.

"You see, then, how dearly you might have to purchase the privileges you envy me."

"But your mother was different to—to mine," said Greta, hesitatingly; "she was not so ambitious, and allowed you to have a heart."

"True! At the same time she would not have liked me to make an imprudent marriage."

"What makes you think I want to make an imprudent marriage?" inquired Greta, colouring hotly.

"I was not speaking of you, Greta."

"I am the last person in the world to do anything of that sort," resumed Greta, bitterly. "I have been too well trained in the world's ways; besides, I like my comforts, and plenty of pretty things about me, and should hate to have to pinch and scrow."

"It isn't pleasant," put in Alice, drily.

"You poor dear! Have you had to pinch and scrow? But never mind," patting her cheek, carelessly, "it is all over now. We are going to take care of you until I know who" (archly), "comes and steals you away from us."

Alice shook her head, but before she could answer the carriage stopped at the door, and Lady Avenley swept in, yawning.

"What, up still?" to Greta. "I thought you would enjoy the change. Just touch the bell, Alice, will you? I have been nearly bored to death, and shall be glad to go to bed. Mrs. Lowrie is a miserable hostess."

"I wonder you went," observed Greta.

"I wonder I did, too; but one meets pleasant people there sometimes. You had better follow my example, and go to bed. Greta, you look rather pale," she concluded, gathering her satin skirts over her arm, and marching to the door. "Good-night!"

"I suppose we must go too," said Greta, rising with a certain reluctance. "I wonder when we shall have such a happy evening again?"

"Ah, when!" echoed Alice, who felt suddenly and unaccountably depressed; and then she laughed, and declared they were a couple of Job's comforters, and linking her arm in Greta's led her up to her room.

Greta was in a strangely nervous, excited state, and felt in such a fever she presently threw open the window and leant out.

The rain had ceased now its dull patter on the leaves, and everything was profoundly still. The moon was trying to struggle through the black clouds, and one pale beam pierced the darkness like an arrow, and pointed down at the white marble tomb where Sir Herbert lay sleeping so calmly, unconscious of the yearning cry for help that went forth to him from his young daughter's lips,—

"If you were only here all would be well!"

But he was lying underground and would not heed, and the tears rained fast from her beautiful eyes. At this minute something touched her hand lightly, and looking down she saw Philip Granville half-concealed amongst the shrubs, watching her eagerly.

"Oh, Philip!" she whispered, tremulously, "you must go away, someone will hear."

"Not if I go closer."

"How can you come closer?"

"Will you let me try?" eagerly.

A woman who hesitates is lost. Greta hesitated ever so slightly, and Philip utilised the interval, short as it was, by climbing up the vine, and the next moment his arm was round her neck, and his lips on hers.

"Oh, Greta, my darling! my darling! I have been dying to see you!"

"She tried to chide him, but it was so sweet to have him there, so hear his tender voice once more, reproaches became impossible, and she just laid her head down on his breast, and began to cry again,—

"Philip, I want you so, they frighten me!"

"Who frightens you, dear?"

"Mamma and Lord Darminster," and Greta told him the story of the latter's foolish jest, and how he tried now to make out he was in earnest.

Philip laughed to reassure her, though he bit his lips angrily too.

"I expect he was only trying you, Greta, and won't persist in his ill-mannered joke. I should vastly like to give him a piece of my mind."

"Oh! no don't," she cried, nervously; "it would do far more harm than good. You mustn't make an enemy of that man, whatever happens."

"Why not?" he asks.

"Because he is so unscrupulous," she answered; "and Philip,"—just breathing the words into his ear—"he knows our secret."

Philip started as if he had been shot.

"Are you quite sure?"

"He picked up my pocket handkerchief near the Haunted Elm that night."

Philip was silent for a minute from sheer distress. He began to see now that he had compromised the girl whose honour was dearer to him than his life, and he recognised the selfishness of the passion he had believed so pure.

"I will never let you come to me again," he said, penitently. "But Lord Darminster can't have seen your face since I did not."

"Seen my face, Philip? Neither of you could have done that, for it was quite dark where I was hiding."

"Yes, but when you went away."

"I slipped down from the tree directly you walked away, before even you were out of hearing, and must have been home before you came back, for I was so excited I never felt my foot at all, strange to say, until I reached my room, and was removing my boots."

"Poor darling! you should have waited until I came to help you down."

"I was far too frightened to linger a moment longer than I was quite obliged, especially after what Lord Darminster said."

"But listen to me, Greta; you must have made some mistake about the time. We distinctly saw a tall, grey figure."

"I am not tall, and I was not dressed in grey."

"Your cloak was lined with grey fur."

"Yes, but I wore the black outside, if you remember, because it was less perceptible, so



["OH, GRETA, MY DARLING! MY DARLING!" CRIED PHILIP, "I HAVE BEEN DYING TO SEE YOU!"]

t wasn't me you saw then. Besides, I was at home by that time, as I told you before."

Philip pondered silently for a few seconds. An uncomfortable conviction that Sir Charles Avanley's solution of the mystery might have been right, after all, was forcing itself upon him sadly against his reason and common sense, but in a way that would be heard. He had fancied that Greta, by some ingenious feminine contrivance, had managed to deceive them that night, and personate Lady Greta's ghost. But if it was not she—who and what was it?

He would not put this question to Greta for fear of startling her, and moreover, had a subject of more interest to discuss at the moment, namely, their prospects, which looked very dark to both.

"I will never marry anyone but you, Philip!" Greta declared, for the fiftieth time; "but my heart fails me when I think of all I may have to go through."

"My sweet love! they can't do more than worry you," he said.

"Isn't that enough, then?"

"It is too much, darling, and I would give the world to be able to save you from it all; but as that can't be, I must pray you to have courage for our love's sake, and one of these days I will make up to you for all you have suffered now."

"If I didn't believe that how could I bear my troubles?"

"You may believe it, dearest!" he said, with a long, long kiss of the sweet, red lips. "I love you as I never thought men could love. If you only knew what hours and hours I spend watching this window, just for a glimpse of your shadow across the blind—the tortures I have endured since you fell ill, and I had only what information I could pick up concerning your state."

"But I wrote to you, Philip!"

"Then there has been some foul play, for I never had your letter," he declared, and made her tell him just when and how the letter was posted.

"Are you sure Miss Marchmont is true?" he questioned, when she had concluded.

"I would stake my life on it. We have enemies all around us, Philip, but she is my friend, at any rate; and though she will not help us, for conscience sake, I am sure she would suffer anything rather than betray us."

"Then she knows all?"

"Very little. I have not confided in her for her own sake, and because it is better she should be ignorant in case mamma should question her; but what she has guessed or seen of her own accord I feel sure she will regard as a sacred confidence; and it is well for both of us that she is here, for she has just what I lack, and that is moral courage, and if it comes to a struggle I am sure she will be a great comfort and support."

"Can't you rely upon your own strength, Greta?" he asked, anxiously.

"I try, and I do feel very brave sometimes; but there is a coldly-determined look in mamma's eyes now and then that seems to chill all the warm blood in my veins, and take away my powers of existence."

"In that case, you will marry Lord Darninster one day at her bidding, Greta?"

"Oh! no, no!"

"But you can't resist her authority?"

"If it came to the point I could."

"Yes, but don't you see, dear, if you let matters go too far it is very difficult to draw back suddenly, and requires far more courage really than if you had shown proper decision in the beginning. Oh! Greta, I wish I could carry you away with me at this very moment; I am afraid to lose sight of you after what you have just said."

"I wish you hadn't to lose sight of me," she said, forlornly. "I love you with all my heart, Philip, and I want to be true to you for my own sake, as well as yours, but I am afraid of myself."

A sudden light broke over his face.

"Listen with all your ears," he said, drawing her head so close to his lips that no sound

of his tender whisper passed beyond; and she did listen, trembling, smiling, blushing, all in one until he had quite finished, when she whispered back,—

"Even this I will do for you, Philip dear," and sealed the secret contract with a kiss.

(To be continued.)

**HINTS ON DRESS.**—The quality of material should decide how dresses are cut. The closely-fitting ensembles, splendid in maroon velvet or other noble textures and colours, would not look so well in simple, colourless materials; and, if for no other reason, the stiff corset destroying the pliancy so beautiful in the natural form, this fashion of garment is apt to produce the effect of an artist's stuffed lay-figure, over which good taste will at least hesitate. The persistent tendency to suggest that the most beautiful half of humanity is furnished with tails can hardly be in good taste, yet amid the constant changes of fashion this strange peculiarity is almost as constantly preserved. Crinoline is not only extravagant in form, but selfish in disregard of the convenience and comfort of others, and selfishness cannot be in good taste. A long waist means a long skirt; length of line in skirt will always be more graceful than brevity. This is piquant and effective on occasions, but not beautiful. A long waist also means in appearance short legs, a disproportion good taste will not desire to suggest. A divided skirt scarcely seems to be a necessity, or to recommend itself on the score of beauty. Extreme tightness is all times a very hazardous experiment. Even beautiful arms, when very tightly enclosed, look not a little like sausages; but, within limits that should not be difficult to define, tightness and looseness may fluctuate with agreeable variety; but it is always to be remembered that folds, with their infinite changeableness of shape, and light, and shadows, are more beautiful than anything which can be achieved in dress.



[A TRUE FRIEND IN THE HOUR OF NEED.]

## NOVELETTE.]

## FOR EVER AND FOR EVER.

## CHAPTER I.

## THE PIC-NIC ON ASHTHORPE ROCKS.

"Young Jamie loved me well, and sought me for his bride,  
But, saving a crown, he had naething else beside:  
To make the crown a pound, my Jamie gaed to sea,  
And the crown and the pound were baith for me."

A DANCING, glittering, laughing summer sea, of intense sapphire blue, with little saucy foaming breakers plashing against the brown rocks and the pale yellow sand. Overhead a sapphire sky to match it, across which royal white piles of sunlit clouds sail in their stately progress. A blinding dazzle of sunshine everywhere. The clear, happy sunshine of mid-June, not the dull, hazy sultriness of the later summer. Low, brown, shining rocks stretch out into the cool, deep water, that laps greenly round their base, swaying the long dark fringes to-and-fro with sleepy motion. Bright green-clad rocks, too slippery and full of shallow pools; and sheer, bare sandstone table-lands, heightening into the precipitous cliffs below Ashthorpe Moor.

The flat, green rocks were covered with water for eighteen hours out of the twenty-four, and then the brown rocks, and the grey limpet-studded rocks within their circle formed a rugged little island, half-a-mile across. It was all pools and steps and natural arm-chairs; here and there a long, low ridge, with a back like a sofa; and in one place there was a large smooth rock, two feet in height and about thirty in circumference, so evidently intended by nature for a table, that it were to defeat her purposes not to hold as many pic-nics there as possible during the summer.

The island had been covered until ten minutes ago, with what from the distance must have looked like a flock of seagulls. Pretty summer dresses, blue and white and

yellow and parti-coloured, had been scattered all over—some fixed like large sea-flowers, close to the advancing water, some moving slowly about, like lazy dawdling butterflies. But the tidings that the road to the beach was dry had broken up the party, and they had hurried, stumbling and jumping over the slippery pathway, to where the tennis nets were extended invitingly on the hard, dry sand.

"Don't go, Cecile; the tide is safe for three hours yet. You will have tennis till you're sick of it all the summer through; and I shall have you only until six o'clock. There are plenty without us."

"Until six! Are you going so soon?"

"I must catch the seven train from Greyminster, and be on board by the morning. Time and tide, and H.M.S. *Oisiris*, wait for no man."

"I wish I were a sailor! I feel as if I lived in such a little corner of the world, and you have the run of it all. You will be seeing such wonderful things and living such a stirring life, and I shall be so flat and humdrum."

"Humdrum! and you are going to be presented next spring, and dance through your first season! And to be so flattered and admired that you will never remember me, cruising about the West Indies, and most likely laid down with yellow fever. Shall you ever think of me, Cecile?"

They were scarcely more than boy and girl, sitting out on the furthestmost rock, their feet almost touching the water.

One was a youth of twenty-two, with handsome bronzed face and dark, curly hair, bright and brave looking, and honest blue eyes, with their farseeing look, acquired by daily practise in scanning the immensity of sky and sea; and sweet tender mouth, whose smiles revealed two rows of small, regular white teeth.

Handsome as he was, his great charm lay in his open countenance and peculiarly winning smile. He was the nephew of the vicar of Ashthorpe, an orphan, and just appointed to a sub-lieutenancy on board H.M.S. *Oisiris*.

His companion was a bright, bonnie girl of seventeen, not a regular beauty, but charming, with her frank, merry face, and all the vigorous, glowing life of her youth.

She was of middle height, with free, graceful carriage and slim, though well-rounded figure; large earnest grey eyes, and soft masses of bronze-brown hair, gathered into a rippled nest upon her neck.

She was simply dressed in dark blue *batiste*, with a wide straw hat. She had lost one of her dogskin gloves in the sea, and was holding up the other to a barking, leaping terrier, who was vociferously beseeching her to throw it after her lost property, and let him have the pleasurable excitement of finding it.

"Think of you, Norman!" she said, flinging it at last into the sea, the dog delightedly dashing in after it. "Why, I shall always be thinking of you. I am going to learn all the sea terms—starboard and larboard, and shiver-my-timbers, you know. I shall be able to talk to you in your own language when you come back. And I am going to read up all about the West Indies. I shall send for Kingsley's 'At Last' in the next box we have from Muddie's, to begin with; and I mean to read the 'Conquest of Peru' and the 'Conquest of Mexico,' and everything bearing on the subject."

"But, Cecile, Peru is not near the West Indies, and I don't think the 'Conquest of Mexico' will be much better. But I shall like you to read about the islands, and the old stories of the Spanish Main in Frobisher and Grenvil's time. Do you really take enough interest in my going there to study it? I shall feel as if your spirit were meeting mine at every island we touch, and hovering over the waves like a guardian angel."

"You know, I shan't have much time for reading in town, so you must not think of me doing so perpetually. Then mamma will want me to read other things—French and German. She is very particular."

"Two years are a long time," said Norman

Leigh, reflectively, looking across the sea. "A great deal may happen in two years!"

He loved her with a love that had grown up with his life; he had never told her of it; and, now that he was going to leave her for so long, a great temptation came to him to ask if she knew of it, and if she loved him at all as he loved her, not only as the playmate of her childhood—her almost brother; and it would have been so sweet to have some assurance from her lips that he would carry away over the seas, to cheer him in his lonely watches, and to strengthen his courage through the perils of the great deep; so sweet to have such a pilot star of hope before him to shine over the dreary vastness of two years!

They both sat silent, the splash of the sea against the rocks alone breaking on that deep afternoon stillness.

She was thinking sorrowfully of Norman going away, and of all the dangers of sea and climate to which he would be exposed.

He was turning over the whole situation in his mind, weighing each consideration before he decided on speaking or on holding his peace.

All the money he had in the world was a hundred a-year—inherited from his father, who, too, had been a sailor, and consequently had left no colossal fortune behind him, even for an only child—and he had his pay.

He was going on a long cruise, into a dangerous climate, and he might never come back.

He was fairly well-born, and, for his father's sake, he had a little influence at the Admiralty.

That was his position in the world. Cecile King, too, was an only child, and she was honest and open-hearted, and true as steel, as he was; but there the likeness between them ended.

Her father was reputed to be of enormous wealth, owning mines in two or three counties—coal and lead, and tin. He was not well-born at all, his father having worked as a common miner, though he rose in time to possess a share in the very mine in which he had hewn and dug, and he died a rich man.

His sons, James and George, had succeeded in buying in all the shares, and had grown rapidly into great capitalists, owning mines, and speculating successfully in foreign stocks. James had lived in Cornwall, and had died, leaving a large family.

George had bought Ashthorpe Park, married the heiress of another large fortune, and lived in magnificent style, beyond any of the real county magnates, so far as lavish profusion and display went. And there was nobody to inherit all this wealth and splendour but this one girl.

Since she was placed amongst the lace and satin and cambric of her cradle Cecile had never known any life but the most luxurious and the most indulged.

She had had nurses and governesses—French and German—then the best masters in town; horses, dogs, birds, every kind of pet that took her fancy. She might have been dressed like a fairy princess had she so willed; walked in silk attire, wearing gems rich and rare; and she had what no money can buy—an untold wealth of love poured upon her from every creature that she knew!

And she was perfectly unspoiled by it all. She liked it—she liked her ponies and her flowers, and her beautiful home, and she liked people being fond of her; and, best of all, she liked her own way.

And she could not be satiated; she could not weep, like Alexander, that there were no more worlds to conquer, in the weariness of having nothing left to wish for, because there were deep-seated springs in her of which she was quite unconscious, but which gave the zest of unsatisfied longing to the over-sweetness of her life.

And now she was feeling that when Norman Leigh went away a great deal of her sunshine would go with him.

How could he talk of love to a girl like this,

a poor sailor, without any prospect before him grander than a post-captaincy some time? He could not ask her to wait for him on the chance of his becoming an admiral when they should both be old and grey?

She was so young, so simple, so generous. If she loved him—and he almost knew that she did—she would promise herself to him at once, and keep her word at any cost. And would it be fair so to let her pledge herself? Would it be honourable?

She knew nothing of the world yet; she would taste its delights while he was far away, and find too late that she had not counted the cost of her promise.

She was very rich; she could not be anything else, even if she married him; but the idea of marrying a wife with tens of thousands a-year, while he could only bring her one or two hundred, was inexpressibly repugnant to him.

Her parents, too, would not allow it; wealth like hers must buy her a coronet. To her that hath must much be given.

But he did so long to hear her say she loved him, to hold her in his strong arms for one minute before he left her, to kiss those sweet red lips. He had kissed her once before, when he came to say good-bye in his gold-banded cap with his dirk at his side, in all the flush of delight at finding himself an officer in the Queen's service. He could not kiss her so now, he knew. He must claim his right to do so first—the right of her acknowledged love, and for that he must not ask. She was too young and impulsive to bind herself.

"Give me something to remember you by?" he asked.

"Why, Norman, in the first place, you must remember me without anything to help your memory. In the second place, you have at least a dozen photographs of me—unless you have lost them or given them away; and I once gave you 'Westward Ho' on your birthday, and a Prayer-book when you were a middy; and I do believe that, when I was a very little girl, I was once silly and sentimental enough to give you a curl of my hair."

"All of which I have still," he said, smiling tenderly and gravely; "and a lot of faded flowers, and an envelope on which you wrote an address for me; and which I copied and kept; and a glove—oh! Cecile, give me that odd glove; it is of no use to you now. It will remind me of to-day."

It was just a brown, pulpy mess, scarcely recognisable as a glove, from the action of salt water and the little terrier's sharp teeth, but he smoothed it out upon his knee, folded it carefully, and put it in his breast-pocket.

"Here is Tom Hay, sent to hunt us from the place," said Norman, quickly and impatiently; "it is too bad that they won't leave us to be rational here. It was too happy to last, wasn't it? Say that it was, Cecile."

Her cheeks were deep pink, and large tears were trembling in her grey eyes. The sight of them almost shook his resolution. Tom Hay was a long way off, carefully picking his steps, and not trusting his short-sighted eyes to peer four yards before him. So Norman could take the little white, wet hand into his, and look straight into the grey eyes, so like his in their steadiness and fearlessness and perfect trust.

"Good-bye, dear!" was all he said.

She did not answer, or she would have cried outright; but her eyes spoke for her in a language far more true than words; and he knew that she loved him, and that he could trust her unto death.

And she knew that he loved her, and trusted her; and though she wondered faintly why he did not say so, she was content to accept the trust.

But though he said good-bye, she did not see the last of him for more than an hour.

Mrs. King received them coldly on the beach, annoyed that Cecile should still be such a tomboy as to prefer romping on the rocks with Norman Leigh to playing decorously at tennis

with the others. It was not a large party, but a very merry, friendly one; they were all neighbours, living within a radius of ten miles or so, and had come under Mrs. King's hostess-ship to this picnic on Ashthorpe Rocks.

First of the party was Mrs. King herself; stout and languid, with a look of noble blood about her.

"Though her veins were filled with tea, as the antiquary's were with printers' ink!" so said one of her aristocratic neighbours.

Her fortune had come from tea plantations in Assam; and her Indian bringieoup had given the slow diceway air to her movements.

She was richly dressed in delicately dated cashmere and silk, realises of the blighting effect of the sea air; and wore ornaments more costly than one usually saw at such a homely festivity.

Mr. King was in town, attending to his wheels and stocks.

Then there was Mr. Leigh, the vicar, with his wife, three daughters, and a boy from Harrow, sent home sooner than usual, to be out of the way of measles. And there were half-a-dozen more pretty girls, two with honourable prefix to their names; and a couple of curates, one dark and ritualistic; the other, fair and muscular; and some hobbledshoy offshoots of noble families, supposed to be studying agriculture under Mr. Carr, of Ashthorpe Grange, but delighted to make themselves generally useful at tennis, dancing, and quartette parties, in that almost manless region. And last in the list, like the bishop in a procession, or the vane on a spire, was Denis, Earl of Armstead, in the peerage of England, and Viscount Connemara, in the peerage of Ireland, who lived at Armstead Castle, and was lord-lieutenant of the county.

He was a tall, handsome man of five-and-forty, with kind blue eyes and a long, tawny beard. He was very grave and dignified, and one would have thought much out of place among those merry boys and girls. It was easier to fancy him one of a literary or artistic coterie, or standing up in his place in the House of Lords to speak on matters of world-wide moment.

He was a bachelor, and had succeeded to the title just after attaining his majority, but until recently he had rambled about the world, leaving Armstead to an empire of dust and spiders and sheeted furniture. He had occasionally presented himself at St. Stephen's during his rare visits to London—once to take his oath—sometimes to listen languidly to a debate on Irish land-laws—generally, merely to vote, beaten up by the Tory whip at the last moment. Then suddenly he had fired of a roving life, and awakened to his duties as a great landed proprietor. As a most eligible marriageable man, the mothers and maidens of his county hoped—and returned to Armstead.

The castle was cleaned, then papered and painted, under his personal direction; and he had become a most hospitable and accessible member of society. He paid flying visits to London. But now that he had taken up his abode at the castle, he seemed as unwilling to leave it as he had been before to visit it. At first he stayed on to superintend the alterations; and now that they were finished, he stayed to enjoy them.

He was now consulting Mrs. King as to the best kind of house-warming with which he should return the hospitalities that had been showered upon him. She was proud and pleased to be singled out as an authority on social matters, and hardly noticed her daughter when she had taken her place amongst the nets and rackets. But Lord Armstead was watching her wistfully all the time in the game with the free active grace of Diana among her maidens.

Then he saw the handsome young sailor look at his watch, hand his racket hurriedly to an unoccupied bystander, and shake hands in breathless haste with everybody in turn,

himself and Mrs. King included. Mrs. King said: "Good-bye!" absently; she had not much attention to spare from an earl and to bestow on a naval sub-lieutenant.

Last of all he went to Cecile. He only shook hands as he did with the others, saying "Good-bye!" in cheery tones; and she smiled, and went back to her game, but she missed the ball, and lost much of her light-hearted springiness, and soon left the court in charge of Amy Leigh, and wandered along the seashore with the Harrow boy.

Mrs. King saw Norman's rapidly retreating figure with eyes full of unmistakable relief. Then she noticed Lord Armstead's wandering attention, and that he was watching Cecile with questioning eyes.

"Cecile is such a child, still," she said, "she will let any of those boys carry her off and monopolize her. You see the Leighs have been her playmates since childhood, and she forgets that she has left off wearing pinafores, and ought to leave off chattering about shells and birds' eggs."

"She is a child," he answered, thoughtfully; "there is an inexhaustible spring of youth in her. She will never grow old."

"Indeed, Lord Armstead, she is not so childish as she looks," said Mrs. King, anxiously. "She is very well informed, and will easily throw off her old habits when she is introduced. And she is absurdly strong and healthy; she never had a day's illness in her life. Why should she not be old?"

Lord Armstead smiled.

"I mean that she seems to have drunk an elixir of perpetual youth. I never knew a girl, or woman, or child whose every movement was so full of intense, eager life. We will not think of her as going through all the Seven Ages, Mrs. King. She seems to be born to live for ever in the fullness of life's brightest, most joyous spring!"

Mrs. King was puzzled. Lord Armstead seemed to like and admire Cecile, and yet she could not fancy that he would choose a lady to wear a countess's coronet who did not bear herself as behaved one destined to such high rank. She was surprised that he should speak so warmly, and it was truly annoying if it should only be the caressing fondness of an elderly man for a pretty, attractive child. He had seen her very seldom. Perhaps, when next year came, and she appeared before him in London with all the glory of a debutante, and the high-bred dignity of manner that she must acquire in the dazzling circles into which she should be introduced, he would see her in a new light, and his evident predisposition in her favour grow into something very satisfactory indeed.

Presently he found himself near Cecile; alone for a minute, idly writing big C.A.K.'s on the sand, with the point of her sunshade.

"I think you are tired of tennis, Miss King," he said; and the great Earl of Armstead, tall and grand and middle-aged spoke quite diffidently, almost shyly, to this little grey-eyed girl in the blue cotton-dress and straw hat. "I have been wondering whether you would like to see the alterations I have been making at the Castle. I think you have not been there lately?"

"No," she said, looking up with her bright, straightforward eyes; "not for many years—not since I was a little girl, and you were always abroad. My nurse used to go to see Mrs. Burrell, and take me; and then I explored when they were talking and didn't miss me."

"And did you like it then?"

"Oh, it was a wonderland!" she said. "So mysterious, with all the empty rooms and furniture in piles, covered with holland. Nobody seemed to live there, but the ladies and gentlemen in the pictures. I made up stories about them. How they came down from their frames at night and had fancy balls and theatricals—and a great deal of nonsense!"

"Would you care to come and see it now? I think it looks much better than in those

old, ghostly days. I should like to hear your opinion on my work."

"I am afraid my opinion is not worth much," she said, laughing; "I don't think anybody ever wanted it before. Besides, how can I leave these people?"

"My plan was this: If you approve," he said, "why not come and finish the day at the Castle? It is so long light that you can see the rooms perfectly by daylight for two hours or more, and then you shall have the other effect of candlelight. I think the place looks at its very best by the soft evening light. Burrell would give us high tea, if you young ladies preferred it to dinner. Let us ask Mrs. King if she will kindly consent to change her plans."

Mrs. King was charmed, so were all the others; with whom invitations to an earl's baronial castle were not common. High tea excused their dresses; it was altogether such a delightfully impromptu thing. So the brakes and Mrs. King's landau were filled again. And they presently found themselves alighting in the green courtyard of Armstead Castle.

It looked very venerable and powerful in the soft, slant light of the evening sun. They had driven under an echoing archway, surmounted by the same worn stone escutcheon of the Aylmers of Armstead, with its eight proud quarterings, and the earl's coronet above. The grass in the quadrangle was smooth and soft as velvet; and dark glistening ivy clung luxuriously here and there about the walls.

The west side, where the building was lower, was in shadow; but the principal part of the Castle was on the east, and its long rows of Tudor windows flashed golden in the sunlight.

A small stone staircase ran up from the courtyard to the first-floor, where was the principal entrance; and delicate starry jessamine and tender pink roses hung in festoons from the balustrade, and clattered about the door. The great grey keep rose majestically in front, with the flag hanging languidly in the still air.

It was all very solemn and stately, with the mournful beauty that there is always about old mansions, even when they are constantly inhabited, and kept in perfect repair.

"It is like a picture or a story," thought Cecile; "it would be quite wicked to eat and talk and do fancy work here. It looks like the sleeping palace. We ought to find ladies in farthingales enchanted on the sofas, and men in ruffs, and pretty little pink and blue cloaks, fallen asleep over their lovelornings."

"It is a fine establishment," thought Mrs. King. "Stranger things have happened; indeed, this would not be strange at all. I could wish for nothing more desirable, and really it does not seem so unlikely."

Of course she was only thinking, so she did not explain to herself what was so desirable. But she smiled her languid smile, and looked exquisitely refined and in keeping with it all, when Lord Armstead gave her his arm and led her into the great hall—all golden light and dark shadow, the sun pouring in long level rays through the tall mullioned windows, and lighting up the portraits opposite with capricious selection.

It was a magnificent room, with a stone pavement and carved oak ceiling, a river of crimson carpet running through the centre and up the steps at one end to the dais, which was carpeted all over, and furnished with a table, sofa, chairs, and bookcases. There were huge stone fireplaces, guarded by griffins on either side; row upon row of dark old portraits; and higher up swung banner after banner, each bearing the arms and name of the noble families whose blood ran in the present Earl's veins. The girls in their morning dresses, the youths in knickerbockers and light summer clothes, the two curates decorously black-coated and white-collared; even Mrs. King, in her rich trailing silk and cashmere, looked very small and insignificant there; only Lord Armstead himself was in harmony, with his grave stateliness and chivalrous manner.

"This place is just as you remember it," he said to Cecile. "It has always been kept in order, being part of the house that is shown to strangers. Would you rather dine here, or have tea, or whatever we have, or in the room beyond?"

"Oh, here!" said Cecile; "do let us have it here; one dines in dining-rooms everyday. Only it seems rather like desecration."

Lord Armstead smiled, referring the matter courteously to Mrs. King and the other matron of the party, who was feeling much astonished and considerably indignant at seeing a little child like Cecile King, just out of the school-room, referred to as supreme authority in the matter.

So they were all seated presently round the hospitably spread table, Mrs. King and Mrs. Leigh presiding at either end; and the youths and maidens laughed and chattered, and Cecile was very quiet, overawed by the weird effects of light and shadow before her, as the gloom gathered in the corners and up in the lofty ceiling; and some of the portraits were quite hidden in the darkness, while here and there a mail-clad warrior or fair, white-bosomed court lady looked out from the dimness, all living and glowing in the dying radiance of evening. Lord Armstead, in his ruff and slashed sleeves, frowned at the careless revellers who were breaking upon his dignified retirement with their frivolous, unheeding mirth; but Lady Nell Aylmer smiled and pouted, and darted bright, killing glances, as if she still sought to attract the admiring homage that had once been paid to her by Rochester and Etheredge, and the Merry Monarch himself. One Lady Armstead looked sadly and reproachfully with her dark eyes under her little rings of curls; her lord had died on the scaffold for King Charles, and Armstead Castle should have mourned him for ever.

Cecile looked at them all, as far as she could see, and neglected her cup and plate. Lord Armstead, from his place, noted every varying expression, though he was talking about the parish and the church restoration to Mrs. Leigh, and about the prospects of the next hunting season to the vicar, who did not hunt, in deference to his wife and his curate; but, nevertheless, took a very keen interest in the sport from which his cloth debared him.

Then they went all over the house, through the small quaint rooms, none of them a tenth of the size of the banquetting hall; all with picturesque, mullioned windows and deep-carved fireplaces, filled with dark oak cabinets, great china jars, curious spindle-legged chairs and tables, chippendale bookcases, whose brass handles shone like gold in the sunset.

Most of it was really old furniture, dragged into the light of day from dark closets and lumber-rooms, carefully repaired and matched.

The gilt mirrors and consols, the drawing-room suites of gay silk and walnut, the marble slabs and flowery carpets of the last régime, had been banished, and their places filled by substitutes so exquisitely chosen, that every chair and curtain and carpet looked as if it had been in its place since the castle was built.

"Doesn't it make one feel so dreadfully small and common!" whispered Fanny Leigh to Cecile as they were looking out at the wide-spreading park with its clumps of gnarled oaks and knotted thorns, under which the deer were sleeping in dark, still groups, while the stars began to come out palely in the east, and a large silver crescent hung low on the horizon.

"I never thought about myself at all!" said Cecile, startled and jarred upon.

"You are pleased?" asked Lord Armstead, coming up quickly.

She looked up, saying simply, "Yes!" but her eyes were full of all the appreciative response he wished to see. Then she said, softly, "It is so beautiful!"

"And yet there is a something wanting—a roe's egg—to make it perfect!"

"Decidedly so!" said Mrs. Leigh, who came up suddenly, overhearing only the last sentence. "It wants a lady's presence to give it an air of refined comfort! You want flowers and

pretty work about, Lord Armstead, and music lying about the pianos, and tennis-nets on the lawn."

"Yes; it is only a bachelor's house, after all!" he said. "I suppose that must be what is wanting, for it looks only a very gloomy old place sometimes, in spite of all the pains I have taken to make it homelike!"

He spoke lightly to Mrs. Leigh, and then called her attention to a Titian, small and dark, but wonderfully rich of tint, and he thought wistfully of the picture he coveted most to see in his home—a bright, girlish face with upturned grey eyes and bronze rippled hair, living and loving, and multiplying his wealth and state a hundredfold by sharing it with him.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE END OF WHEEL CECILIA.

"He had been gone but a week, 'twas only two, When my father broke his arm and the cow was stole awa;  
My mither, she fell sick, and Jamie at the sea,  
And auld Robin Gray came a-courting me."

THE roc's egg missing from Ashthorpe Park was not of the same genus as Lord Armstead's. Everything was there that money could buy, and taste select.

There were splendid gardens and conservatories, a sweeping lawn, a park nearly as large as Armstead.

There were no deer, but there were peacocks on the terrace, sweeping their long trains along the gravelled drive.

The rooms were splendidly furnished; and if there were no family portraits, there were score upon score of well-chosen pictures, ancient and modern, and there was a grand coat-of-arms carved on the library fireplace, and in other places, too, and there were rare statuettes on tables and cabinets, and brackets filled with china, and soft, deep carpets on the inlaid floors.

Everything had been bought by Mr. King, and had cost a great deal of money; but there was one thing that he could not buy. Henry VIII. said he could make a duke, but he could not make a Holbein. He might have said as truly that he could make a duke, but he could not make a gentleman; and neither could Mr. King, with his thousands, make a patrician home like Armstead at Ashthorpe Park.

Costly, splendid, luxurious and tasteful it was, but it was all flash and glitter, skin deep.

Money jingled in the soft, hushed tread of the well-trained servants, in the silken rustle of Mrs. King's dresses, in the opening and shutting of the painted doors. It blinked and glistened in the heavy plate and delicate cut glass; on the new picture frames, and the priceless Florentine vases; on the silver candelabra, and the jewels on Mrs. King's slender white fingers. It weighed down the rich curtains over the doors and windows, and the atmosphere heavy with the scent of rare flowers.

It had bought beauty and luxury and position. People said it might yet buy rank—but it could not buy noble lineage, and after that Mrs. King vainly sighed.

She was sitting in her low, softly-cushioned chair, her idle hands in her lap, alone in her beautiful drawing-room. The warm odorous summer air stole in at her window beneath the blinds. She could just see a strip of park and trees, and the keep of Armstead Castle in the hazy distance, over the dark, silent summer woods.

In spite of her rich dress and sparkling jewels, her *enourage* of wealth and ease, a pucker of anxiety was upon her fair brow.

First there was Cecile, just seventeen, not introduced; not a beauty by any means, though a fresh, pleasant-looking maiden, but without any appreciation of elegant comfort, much less of rank and position, and a coronet likely to be laid at her feet; not a brand new Brummagem one, but real old pearls and strawberry leaves

in their twelfth or thirteenth blossoming; and she was such a self-opinionated, tricky, not-to-be-depended-upon girl, that she might actually refuse to pick it up, for the very ridiculous reason that she did not want it.

Mrs. King did not even know whether Cecile was conscious or not of Lord Armstead's devotion. She seemed quite as much pleased to talk to the vicar, the curate, old married Sir James Dering and Tommy Dering, who was at Eton.

She dared not hint to Cecile, or try to sound her on the subject, for if the girl once suspected she were planned about, or even hoped about, it would drive her into extreme opposition. Her mother could only watch, and do her best to smooth away obstacles that might arise; it was quite impossible to manage or contrive.

Then Mr. King had not been himself of late. He had never shown her any tender, careful attention since the first year of their married life. He was completely absorbed in business, and she had grown to be too much absorbed in her establishment, her social duties, and her climbing up the ladder of society to miss the petting and devotion for which she had once craved. But lately, especially since the winter, his absences from home had become longer and more frequent; and when he did spend a week or two in his splendid house he was always cross and preoccupied, writing letters, or seizing and devouring the contents of the post-bag with feverish anxiety.

At first his wife fancied his irritability must be caused by threatened gout; now she felt sure that something had gone wrong with his new venture—Wheel Cecilia.

Still there were other mines and other ventures on hand. If Wheel Cecilia did fail it could scarcely effect seriously their immense income.

If Mr. King was much put out she must say no more about the yachting trip she had been proposing for the autumn; but they could live quietly until May, perhaps taking Cecile to Scarborough or Burntisland for bathing, and Mr. King would have recovered his temper by the spring, when they must go up to town and introduce their only child—their young heiress.

But Mrs. King knew that if unmarried earls were not quite rarities in town, neither were heiresses, and Cecile might not have such a brilliant chance again if she threw away this one. And she grew worried and anxious, and wondered where Cecile was all this hot afternoon. She had gone to the church with a great basket of hot-house flowers to adorn it for a choir festival, but she was surely very long.

Then Mrs. King's heart quite stood still with the horror of a new suspicion. What if Cecile should get into any scrape with the curate? She was quite capable of it! She should go no more alone to the church or schools on any pretext whatever. And Mrs. King grew more and more restless, and was just going to ring to send somebody in search, as if for a truant child, when the culprit herself walked into the room looking very hot and uncomfortable, hurriedly accounting for herself before her mother had had time to ask a question.

"I took the flowers and left them with Fanny Leigh, mother. They were charmed with them. They kept me to show me some devices, and then I came home through the woods for coolness. Oh dear! one cannot breathe to-day!"

"It is most tiresome and unladylike, Cecile," said Mrs. King, crossly, "that you should run about the country alone, and stay so long that one never knows where to find you, and then come in with a face like a haymaker! Fancy if Lord Armstead had been here and seen you—or anybody! Do go and cool yourself, and make yourself presentable. You know I cannot endure people coming when I am alone. This heat quite exhausts me."

Cecile went out with an unmistakable look of relief. She went to her pretty dressing-room, with its wide, open windows and cool chintz hangings, but she made no attempt at improving her appearance. She did her

very best to make matters worse by sitting down on her low sofa and burying her face in her hands, and giving way to bitter, but smothered sobs and floods of tears.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" she cried, "what an unfortunate, wicked girl I am! Oh, I am so sorry! I couldn't help it—how could I guess? Oh, it is dreadful! Oh! how could anybody ever think of such a thing? Oh dear, dear me!"

And the terrible, wicked, unfortunate thing that had happened was only that she had been asked to become a countess and mistress of the beautiful old castle, with its park and woods, and the wife of a good, high-minded, noble English gentleman, who loved her with all his heart.

She had been sauntering along the path in the wood, singing softly to herself, and now and then stopping to watch her white, brown-patched fox-terriers hunting for rabbits and such small deer amongst the bracken and nut trees, and sometimes standing to look at a saucy little squirrel sitting up in an oak, with its timid, questioning brown eyes and great curly brush along its back.

A big black retriever dashed through the underwood and joined the chase. She looked up, and saw Lord Armstead looking at her with his grave, kind eyes.

He had been all over the world, and seen beauty in every created form and colour—dark, languishing southern loveliness, fair-haired, blue-eyed Germans, and voluptuous, gazelle-eyed eastern odalisques.

He had studied beauty as it appeared idealized in the brain and heart of great artists in the galleries of Rome and Florence, and living for ever on glowing canvas and in imperishable marble; but he had wearied of it all, and had even come to care more for a china cup or a fantastic dado than for the fairest woman's face.

And then he had seen this bright, happy-faced child, younger than her seventeen sweet years, as he was older than his four-and-a-half decades, and she had brought him a new message of hopefulness and new life, and for the first time in his life a real, true, pure love had taken possession of his heart.

He did not intend to tell her of it yet. She was so young, and would be startled. He would be very patient, and win her love slowly, but surely.

That he would win it some time he never doubted, but he was strangely humble and utterly without reliance on the persuasive force of his rank.

He knew that Cecile would not be won by such an allurement, and he felt a great yearning to be loved for himself—loved by a fresh, honest, young heart, that had never wasted itself on dreams of gratified vanity or ambition.

And in spite of his well-considered resolution, in spite of her complete unpreparedness, he told her of his love in the wood, and asked her not to answer him there and then, but to remember that he loved her and would wait patiently until she had learnt to love him, even for twice seven years.

But Cecile thought him quite an old gentleman, and could have laughed when he contemplated waiting fourteen years longer before he married had she not been first astonished and frightened, and then genuinely distressed.

"Oh, no, no, no!" she cried; "dear Lord Armstead, I wish this had not happened. I cannot understand how you could think of such a thing. I mean, I am not worth it. I am so silly and stupid, but I know I cannot marry you. I don't mean to be rude and ungrateful," she said in a pretty apologetic voice laying her hand confidently in his, and then trying to draw it away when she found how painfully he grasped it. "It is very, very kind of you—only too kind; and I do like you so much—really; but I am sure you have quite a mistaken idea of me, or you would not have thought of it."

"Never is a long time," he said, gently and quietly; "one easily talks of ever and never at seventeen. I should not have spoken so soon; but now that it is done, it seems to be the best way, after all. I am much older than you, child—thirty years older"—he winced slightly as he said it. It sounded like such a formidable gulf between them, and he saw her shrink a little at the mention of the disparity. "And I have learnt that at least a great deal of good comes to those who know how to wait. Do not distress yourself—you have not pained me. I could not have expected it to be otherwise."

"Oh, please don't talk of waiting—it is no use, I am quite, quite sure. Oh dear! it is so dreadful—but it is not my fault. I had no idea!"

"Then I will not talk of it, and you need not remember it. I am going to Norway to-morrow, or to-night if I can get off, so my presence will not force the memory upon you. Only let me ask one thing of you. If ever you should want a friend—it does not seem likely now, does it? but we all find a need of a true friend sometimes in our lives—you will remember me, and let me help you if I can."

He shook hands in his usual quiet courtly way, and walked on, through the wood, never looking back. And Cecile sat down upon the moss and ferns, and tried to realise the thing that had happened.

She never once recollected that the man who had asked her to marry him was an earl. She only thought of him as an elderly gentleman, very kind and most charming to talk to, when he told her about his pictures and *bric-à-brac*, and his strange adventures; and she had given him pain and broken up their pleasant friendship, and behaved very badly indeed.

Then she laughed at the preposterous notion of herself, settled down into a sober married lady, just when she was beginning thoroughly to enjoy life. And to marry a man as old as her father! She didn't want to marry anybody; the idea of a husband was utterly absurd, and out of the question.

Then as she sat under the beeches and larches, while the wild roses hung in the bushes and the flies buzzed in the still air, and now and then a trout jumped out of the river, she thought that though the idea of a husband was very prosy and humdrum and unattractive, the idea of a lover was very bright, and all painted in colours of rose and golden. But she did not think of Lord Armstead as a lover; it was more repulsive to her to look upon him in that light than in the other.

She thought of a brown, young face with merry blue eyes and frank, joyous smile, and curly hair damp with the salt spray.

And it was a pleasant thought; for she sat on, smiling unconsciously, the sunny river beneath her eyes, but seeing with her spirit's eyes only the boundless blue expanse of the Atlantic. Then the church clock chimed, and she started from her trance.

The dogs, tired of her stillness, barked and bounded round her, as she rose quickly and went home.

Afterwards she remembered how kind Lord Armstead was, and how sorry he had looked, and she cried in bitter repentance of the wrong she had so unconsciously done.

Mr. King came home next day for a dinner party; and Mrs. King had the disappointment and mortification of an apology from Lord Armstead, who was on the point of leaving for Norway.

The truth did not dawn upon her; but she was extremely annoyed, first that her principal guest should fail her, and then that, for the present, her hopes about Cecile must be laid aside.

It was a splendid dinner; for the London season was over, and most of the neighbouring families were back again in their country seats, bringing with them an influx of new faces as they filled the houses with visitors on their way to the grouse moors.

Mrs. King had a lord to take her out to dinner, and there were three M.P.s with their

wives, and a baronet, and an honourable, and reverend rector to say grace, besides lesser luminaries.

But she noticed that her husband looked worn and depressed when he was not speaking, and his flow of conversation was evidently forced; and being naturally nervous and fanciful, she felt burdened by a vague dread of the knew not what, and, for the time, forgot that Lord Armstead had so suddenly disappeared, and watched her husband furtively from behind the tall array of plants between them, barely listening to the aristocratic gossip of Lord Kingussie at her side.

"How extravagantly those people do things," said his lordship to her ladyship in the privacy of their brougham. "And they never seem to get used to their magnificence. I could see that Mrs. King had the dinner on her mind all the time I was talking to her. They cannot learn to be easy and natural!"

"And that man is a perfect bear!" said Lady Kingussie. "His thoughts are always on 'Change. He cannot talk when he is not quoting stock, or whatever they call it. But the girl is nice and unaffected, poor thing!"

"I wonder how much he has a year?" said Lord Kingussie, meditatively. "Hardly knows, I should think. He is a lucky fellow—prudent and steady-going too. They have been rich for a long time now, and seem as safe as the Bank. But one never knows what may happen in trade."

But, in spite of what he said, Lord Kingussie was as much astonished as all the rest of the county, almost as much as poor, bewildered little Cecile, when news came in a few days that the great mining speculation, Wheal Cecilia, had failed, and that the Kings were ruined.

Mr. King had never been popular, and nobody was particularly sorry for him. Some people pitied the innocent wife and daughter, until they remembered that Mrs. King had a large fortune, which, of course, would have been settled on herself and her child. But gradually one fact after another became public, and the terrible truth stood bare before the world.

There was no fraud, nothing in the least dishonest. Mr. King was only to blame as a gambler is to blame who goes on laying stake after stake, hoping his luck will turn, and finding himself penniless in the end.

Wheal Cecilia had been the last venture of a chain of unsuccessful speculation. In it Mr. King had risked all that remained of his fortune, which had been rapidly diminishing in the last four years. He had also most unfortunately risked his wife's money, which was entirely at his disposal. The die was cast; his luck had not turned; all was over.

Mrs. King, never strong, with her Indian constitution, fell seriously ill. Cecile could realize nothing; and the occupation and anxiety of waiting on her mother filled her mind, so she could not take the catastrophe in.

Mr. King shut himself up in his study, and would give neither assistance nor information to them. Cecile learnt at last, piecemeal, the whole state of affairs. She knew it was ruin, but for a long time it was only a word to her with no meaning.

There was still plenty to eat and drink; the handsome rooms looked the same as if nothing had happened or would happen to disturb their order; the servants were all about, respectfully sympathetic, attending to their duties with mechanical precision. Cecile did not hear them talking amongst themselves, criticising and prophesying, and speculating on new places.

But soon enough there came a day when she passed through an ordeal of fire. Ashtorpe was to be sold, with all the furniture, pictures, horses, carriages—even a day was fixed for the sale of the flowers.

To turn out of her beautiful home, to see all the objects familiar since her infancy scattered to the four winds, to become the property of strangers! Slowly and painfully, each new

idea a fresh stab in her quivering, sensitive heart, she took it all in.

"On Wednesday, the 17th—on Wednesday, the 17th," she repeated to herself. "The furniture is to be sold on Wednesday, the 17th; we must be gone by then, for the beds and chairs are going to be sold, so we shall have nothing to sleep or sit upon. And where in all the wide world can we go?"

She went out into the garden for the first time for a fortnight. She had been with her mother, glad of the excuse to keep indoors, and be out of the way of curious if not unfriendly eyes.

Everything looked so exactly the same: the peacock perched on the balustrade of the terrace, the peash on the steps, the fountain merrily dancing and sparkling amongst the flower-beds, the geraniums and calceolarias and lobelias flaunting in their gay borders, the roses and lilies and mignonette in their tender fragrant beauty, the wide spreading cedars casting their "dark layers of shade" over the velvety turf, the glittering acres of glass, the pale blue smoke wreaths from the lodge amongst the elms.

She walked on till she came to the railing of a paddock; a young bay mare recognized her step and ran whinnying up, thrusting her nose forward to be caressed. Cecile smiled, glad to meet a friend that loved her, feeling sympathy in that love, though it was unreasoning and quite ignorant of her trouble.

"Hero, dear Hero!" she said, "you are the only friend I have left!"

Then a sharp pang smote her; the horses and dogs must be sold!

Nobody but herself had ever ridden Hero since she was broken in, three years ago, and they loved each other dearly. She was so gentle, and graceful, and affectionate, and yet so spirited, though she would always obey Cecile's hand. It was pain beyond bearing to think that she, too, should pass into strange hands.

And Cecile ran through in her mind a list of all her pets, and she thought of the anguish she had read of in slave stories, where children are parted from mothers and husbands from wives, and she thought that she was tasting a sorrow very like theirs.

There was Hero; then there was dear, shaggy, old Bobby, on whom she had ridden from her babyhood, until she was promoted to Hero; surely nobody would want to buy Bobby! He was no use to anybody, and was ending his days in a grass field in epicurean idleness. She did not care so very much for the carriage horses, they were changed so frequently. They had had one pair for only three months; not old friends even, like her father's saddle horses.

And, oh! the dogs—how she loved the dogs, especially her own fox-terriers and the big Newfoundland that she had ridden on the lawn when she was very small; and little Dash, the Skye terrier.

What would life be with nothing left to love! Her poor little heart-strings were each tightly bound round something—what should she do when they were all torn away? She had always loved her home; and now she thought that she had never known how dear it was. She thought her life was all over. At seventeen. It was very sad; so she sat down on a low, rustic seat, beside a fishpond, shut in by a hedge of sweet briar, and began to cry for herself, in pity for her early sunset, and the dreary, long twilight before her.

The tears did her good; they cleared her dull, aching head, where they had been gathered heavy, unshed, for so long. She dried her eyes, and the cool air from the pond came gratefully to her hot brow and cheeks. She clasped her hands and leant forward as if the silent, lily-laden water were a magic mirror, in which she could read her destiny. It was of no use to sit there and cry; indeed, she could not even sit there much longer.

She must do something, and she wondered what it would be. She knew nothing about money, it had always come to her; and she

had no idea how hard it sometimes is to make it.

She had heard over and over again that they had lost everything, and yet she did not understand that it might be difficult for her father to make an income, starting afresh. She knew that they were going to be poor and live in a small house, and have one or two servants, but she never doubted that they would be comfortable after a fashion.

House-rent and wages never crossed her mind; she supposed they would have small plain dinners, but nicely cooked and served as a matter of course; plenty to eat, but not much variety. She would make her dresses last a long time; they would have to be turned and altered, of course, but she had quite left off growing, which was lucky.

They would have to take cabs as there would be no carriages and horses, but they were going to live in London, so they would find them convenient enough. Her mother must have little comforts and elegancies, or she could not live, but Cecile was quite ready to rough it, and do with bare necessities.

A quick step came towards her, behind the briar hedge, and the wish of a dress. She looked anxiously round for a hiding-place—she did so hate the idea of seeing strangers, but there was neither time nor opportunity. So she rose, quiet and self-possessed, and shook hands with the vicar's wife, who was really a kind-hearted woman at the bottom, though inquisitive and fond of meddling in other folk's business. It was fortunate for Cecil that it was so, for many others who were as kindly intentioned, were hindered by delicacy from offering assistance. Mrs. Leigh was burdened by no fine sense of delicacy; but she was sorry, and came to be useful.

"And now, Cecile," she said, after inquiries about health were over, "what do you think of doing? Most likely I can be of some use in advising you. Your mother is delicate, and besides, knows very little of the world; and you have no aunts that I ever heard of. Of course, everything you tell me, dear, will be quite sacred, and if I can help you, I shall be truly glad."

Cecile looked up at Mrs. Leigh's kind, motherly face. She had been feeling so lonely, that her lips quivered at the sound of sympathy.

"I think there is nothing to do but go to a smaller house, somewhere in London," she said. "I believe we are going to an hotel first—until we find a house that will suit. Then we shall be very economical, and I am sure we shall be happy when we are used to it. I have seen a great many pretty little houses about Clapham and Norwood, with nice gardens. We could do with one of them until better times come."

"Dear child!" said Mrs. Leigh, "you cannot expect to live in a villa at Norwood with a garden; rents are not at all low there. You will have to go to a house in a cheap street, somewhere about Russell-square, or further north. And I should advise your father to save most of the allowance they make him from the estate, and not spend it on expensive hotels."

"In a street!" repeated Cecile, quite appalled. "We cannot live in a street; the noise would kill mother."

"The noise of Grosvenor-square wouldn't kill her, would it? But you see, Cecile, your father has no money at all; he will probably have to get a situation as clerk or manager, if he is lucky enough, and he may possibly hear of nothing for some time. And have you thought about yourself? What are you going to do?"

"Do?" asked Cecile, puzzled. "I shan't want to do anything. I don't care at all for gaiety. I shall like gardening, if we have a garden, and I shall try to trim my bonnets, and make my dresses, and help mother with housekeeping, and be very busy and useful."

"And who is to pay for the materials you make into dresses, and for the meat and

groceries, and washing—the coals and gas and taxes?"

Cecile was ignorant, but she was far from being stupid. She sat dumb with horror at hearing of all these unknown sources of expense.

"We shall have some money—some time;" she said, at last. Then she burst into tears, crushed by her strange new words, and sobbed upon Mrs. Leigh's broad black silk shoulder.

"There, dear, there!" said the vicar's wife, her own eyes full of tears. "Cry away, it will do you good, poor darling. You are young to bear so much trouble, and have been badly brought up for meeting it. But it's no use shutting one's eyes to the truth; and if you make up your mind, to face it now, you will find it come easier in time. You would be much happier with something to do, to occupy your mind, and keep you from feeling a burden to your parents; indeed, you might be a great help to them, if you get a good salary. Your accomplishments are all fresh."

"Salary!" cried Cecile, with flashing eyes. "What do you mean, Mrs. Leigh?"

"You wouldn't be the first lady, Cecile, who has had to earn her living by teaching," said Mrs. Leigh. "You would get into a nice family, and with your music and languages so good, you might ask ninety pounds a year."

Cecile's anger had gone. She asked in a low, frightened whisper: "Do you really think things are as bad as that? Must I work for money! But I cannot teach—I am not clever—I know almost nothing."

"Then there's been a great deal of money wasted on your education! But nonsense; you speak French and German very well, and your singing is first-rate. However, we won't talk of that to-day; your new home is the first thing to think of. Would you like me to go up to town to-morrow—you can go too, or not, as you like—and look for a likely house? I have seen the trustees, and know pretty well what kind of a house it must be. You say your father will not move, but leaves everything to him and you. You had best go with me, and see for yourself. It will be better for you than moping here."

It was hard to bear for a girl who had never before known an hour's anxiety, whose only experience of the want of money had been when she put her hand in her pocket and found she had forgotten her purse. But painful as it was to make an effort, she thought that there was something to do; even the act of bracing herself to face circumstances was better than inaction, and took her mind away from contemplation of present sorrows, and from debilitating itself by vague forebodings of the unknown trials before her.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A NEW HOUSE.

A dull street in the north of London; small common-looking houses with a bay window on the ground floor, and three small ones close together above; then a dormer window in the roof. It was a new street, and the pavement had just been completed in this part, though the road was a chaos of mud and stones; further up the street were unfinished houses, and no pavement; then came a dreary wilderness of building sites, brickyards, and clayey ponds.

Inside the house it was strange and unhome-like. Cheap and showy furniture had been purchased with a sum of money advanced to Mr. King; a few ornaments, imitation antique, a piano hired at so much a month, harsh, and discordant of tone—there were no books about—the only pretty things in the smart little room they called the drawing-room were some flowers that Cecile had bought in the street that morning—sweet country-looking roses, sweet peas and mignonette, and Cecile herself, who was sitting surrounded by ovels and wools, trying to work a few pretty oddies and ends to make the place look comfortable.

They had been established in Beamsfield-

street for two months, and Cecile was thinking busily, sometimes rather wearily, of the future. The fuss and activity of the removal, the buying of the furniture, and the settling into the new groove was over, and there was time to look about.

She had learnt a great deal in that time; new knowledge had come pouring into her, dazing her at first. Mrs. King was really incapable, physically and mentally, of exertion; she was never strong, and the shock had weakened her terribly. She gave way under it entirely, and made no attempt to rally. She lay in bed every day until one o'clock, then slowly dressed, assisted by the housemaid and Cecile, complaining bitterly all the time of their want of skill and quickness. At last she went to the drawing-room and lay on the sofa, alternately crying and complaining; rising at seven to go into the small, stuffy dining-room, with its view of a backyard, coal-house, and the back of the next street. She could not bear the sight; so the blinds were pulled down and the gas lighted, which only reminded her that they had no silver candlesticks.

The dinner was ill-cooked, the table-cloth soiled and crumpled. The housemaid who waited was slow and stupid; she breathed hard, and was noisy in moving the plates and dishes. Mr. King insisted on having four courses and dessert, and grumbled at the hardship of doing without *entrées* and creams, though Cecile knew well enough that they had much more on the table than they could afford. He was angry if Cecile refused wines and dessert, angry with Mrs. King if she ate little, angry with the cook for making the dishes so untasteful, angry with the housemaid for handing him the wrong wine.

He was furious when he found out where he must live. He wanted to begin his new life with every elegant comfort around him, if not with luxury, and Cecile had great difficulty in persuading him to do with two servants, though now she was beginning to wonder how money would be found to pay the wages of two, and wished she had thought of trying to manage with one. For Mr. King had nothing to do, and their small stock of ready-money was rapidly dwindling away.

He had given a sum into Cecile's hands for housekeeping, reserving the rest for his own daily use; but hansom and cigars, and wine and luncheons in town, and newspapers, had soon made his purse empty; he had applied to Cecile for replenishment, and nearly drained her supplies. And all the time he insisted on "living like a gentleman," as he said.

"We must not lower ourselves further than we can help," he said; "it is degradation enough as it is to live in this hotel, and have one's plate taken away by a rough, dirty hand. Money will come in soon, and meantime, Cecile, you must be more economical."

Cecile had exactly five pounds in hand; a butcher's bill to pay for a fortnight, milk for a month; and it was October and growing chilly, and she had just begun to realise that coals did not grow in cellars, but must be ordered in and paid for. She still, to all practical purpose, fancied that gas ran naturally through the pipes, and that the revenues of the country and municipal expenses were independent of rates and taxes.

Once she would have thought five pounds a good deal of money for housekeeping; but now she knew how very quickly it went in little daily necessities, without counting such large items as eating and drinking. The people opposite washed in the house, and she wondered if they would find it more economical to do so, for the washing bill was a serious consideration every week. She felt so lonely and ignorant; if somebody would only come and advise her; she knew nothing about the ways of such people as those who lived near them, and wished she could find out how they lived. Of course they were people different altogether from themselves; it was horrid to think that they should have

to shape their lives to match those of the clerks and shopkeepers and lodging-house keepers amongst whom their lot was cast.

But as Cecil reflected there was one great advantage that those people had over them. The wretched, little photographer, the starved looking young dressmaker, the ironmonger and his rude, rough boys, the telegraph clerks, and the manager of a large millinery establishment—they all had money coming in, little though it might be. What did people do who had no money coming in at all? What rules had they for domestic economy?

Her father was growing hopeless, though he still set his face steadily against retrenchment. She thought of what Mrs. Leigh had suggested; why should she not make money herself? Her father, of course, would be mad with indignation at the idea; but money they must have, and if he was unable to make it, the task fell upon his daughter's shoulders.

Comforts, even luxuries, were a necessity to Mrs. King. Cecil's heart ached when she thought of her delicate, morbid mother, so ill-fitted to battle with privation. She had been vexed that morning when Mr. King had insisted on having game for dinner. Game had been one of Cecil's great surprises—she had had no idea how much it cost; but it was the only thing Mrs. King seemed to care for, and Cecil recoiled herself for her meanness in grudging this little expense.

But what could she do? She took up the *Times*, which Mr. King refused to give up, and replace by a penny paper, and looked at the advertisements, but nobody seemed to want her.

All the governesses must be experienced or certificated, or Parisian, or German, or know Latin and mathematics; all the companions—there were three wanted—must understand nursing, or be middle-aged.

She could not be a nurse, or a waiting-maid, or a cook; nobody would take her, she thought, amused; and it would kill her mother if she went into a shop. There was no place for her in the world.

Then she looked idly through the other sheet, and her eye fell upon the theatres. She did so enjoy a play! Would she never in all her life be able to see another!

She had looked forward to next season's opera more than to the balls and drawing-rooms and races that were promised to her.

A bright thought flashed into her mind. She might not be able to look at a play—could she possibly act in one? She knew she had a lovely voice that was capable of very high training. She had acted in theatricals often, not only in charades, but in good parts—Constance in *She Stoops to Conquer*, Maria and Lucy in *The Rivals*, the first bridemaid in *Trial by Jury*. She had heard of great fortunes made by actresses—why should not she at least make a little one!

So her work fell from her hands, and she was so absorbed in picturing herself bringing down the house, like Mrs. Kendal or Ellen Terry, that she did not notice a ring at the door-bell, and rose startled to her feet when a tall, bearded stranger entered unannounced.

He had given his name to the servant, but it had taken her so completely by surprise that she did not believe her ears. Then she heard Cecil exclaim, "Lord Armstead!" in a tone of delighted astonishment, and rushed to the kitchen, leaving the door open, to communicate the amazing piece of news to the cook.

She had never answered a bell rung by a live lord before.

There was nothing but radiant pleasure in Cecil's face. There was help come, somebody on whom she felt she could fully rely, who would sympathize and advise, who knew all about everything; for she believed implicitly in the omnipotence and omniscience of the great and rich friend who had once bidden her turn to him when her hour of need should come.

She looked so bright and glad amongst her mean surroundings. The careworn pucker had passed from her brow, but it was not the happy child he had left whom he had found again,

but a brave-looking, earnest-eyed girl. And he noticed at once, with his keen, anxious eyes that her dress, neat and pretty as it was, had lost the look of freshness that he had been used to see. And though he was tingling in every nerve at being once more in her presence, and his eyes rested upon her as if they could never gaze their fill, the ugliness and commonness of the room oppressed him like pain.

He had been wandering in out-of-the-way corners in Norway, and had not heard of their misfortunes for some weeks. Then he had hurried home as fast as steam could bear him in agonized impatience to help.

There had been a further delay in finding them out, and now that he had come he did not in the least know what he could do.

He had never liked nor trusted Mr. King, and, as far as he was concerned, he might do as he pleased. But that Cecil should suffer! Little Cecil, a hair of whose brown head he would not have seen hurt—on whom he felt would have lavished all the love and care and riches that were his to give!

He could not offer her money; he had no right in her but that of a friend, and not even of an old friend. He could not take advantage of her position, to ask her to give him the right to shield and care for her all her life. But he did intend that she should love him some day, only he wanted to wait until her love came freely; he knew it could not be forced or bought.

"I am so glad to see you," she said, presently. "I want to know something so much. Do you know anything about the theatres?"

"Yes," he answered, much surprised; "but there is nothing going on at present; it is the dead season. Still, if you care to go—"

"Oh! it is not that," she said, smiling; then continued shyly; "it is very conceited of me, but I do so wish—do you think I could act?"

"Act?" he repeated. "Yes! you act very nicely. Good Heavens! Miss King," he exclaimed; "you are surely not thinking of that? Things are not so bad, are they? Acting is out of the question; but are you seriously thinking of doing something for money? I cannot allow it!"

He paced quickly up and down the room, speechless for a minute; sorrow struggling with an intense wish to break his resolution, and carry her off and marry her at once, to save her from such a life.

Then he saw a pained, humiliated expression in her face, a cloud come over its brightness. He controlled himself, and sat down.

"Women often make money," she said, looking up with her innocent confiding eyes. "Can you not tell me of some way in which I can make some? I am afraid it is really necessary; papa seems to get nothing to do, and I thought you would know what it would be best for me to do."

He covered his eyes with his hand, and thought a moment.

"Cecil," he said, calling her by her name, unnoticed by either of them. "I should be so very happy—you would do me such a great favour—if you would allow me to offer you a loan—for yourself, of course; your parents need know nothing about it. You could pay me as soon as Mr. King has a fair income. I shall not miss it in the least, you know." He stopped, blushing as much as Cecil herself.

But she, with her simple nature, understood the true nobility of the man who was speaking, and was neither hurt nor humiliated.

"Thank you," she said, gently; "it is so very—very kind; but really I have money for the present, and when I do need to borrow I will ask you," she added, with her quick instinct, knowing it was what he would like her to say.

"You must not work. I cannot bear it!" he murmured in his beard.

"How do you know I shall not do something to make myself famous, and that you will be proud to know me—like Miss Thompson, or Rosa Bonheur, or George Eliot?"

"You might do that," he said, quickly. "Can you paint or write?"

"Not a bit!" she answered; "but there must be something I can do; I only want to find out what. Surely you can suggest something?"

It was very hard to control himself, but he tried and succeeded. He would not pain her by causing her to have to refuse him again; it would prevent him from being able to help her. She could not trust him as a friend, and he saw that he was the only friend she had who might be of service.

"Will it pain you to tell me exactly how matters are?" he asked. "I can scarcely give advice or opinion unless I know a little more."

She told him everything frankly, and then waited to hear his decision.

"You must wait a little," he said; "something may turn up, you know, as Mr. Micawber said. Your father may already have heard of employment. And, meantime, I must insist on your allowing me to lend you a little money—if not for yourself, to buy nice little things for your mother. You would have thought it quite right if I had sent her a hamper of game, or some curiosities of gourmandise from abroad if you were rich now! Instead of sending her a supply of game, which she could not eat all at once, I give you the money, that you may buy it when she wants it."

He laid some notes upon the open piano. Cecil looked at him with her eyes full of tears; she tried to thank him, but could not steady her voice.

"And now," he said, cheerfully, "you have done me one very great pleasure; let me ask for another. Write to me and tell me how you are getting on, and I trust you to let me know if there is no more money forthcoming when this supply gets low. You are upon your honour. I am going to Armstead, and shall probably stay there until after Christmas. I must say good-bye. Remember me most kindly to Mrs. Leigh; I am sorry she is not able to see me. And don't think any more about the stage."

Mrs. King knew nothing of Lord Armstead's visit until he had gone. He had called very early, and she was always late in leaving her room. Her first sensation on hearing of it was one of shame that he should see what a small, shabby house they were living in. What would he think of Jane's uncouth ways—the dirty face, and indescribable apron that always seemed to be *de rigueur* with her in the morning? How had she announced him? Had she looked as if a gentleman, much less an earl, were an unusual visitor there?

Then she felt proud and gratified that he, their greatest acquaintance, should have caught them out. Evidently he intended to consider himself on the footing of an intimate friend, as he called at such an unconventional hour. What a vista opened before her in the place of the dull, dead wall that had hitherto closed out all prospect of any sunshine or beauty coming into her life! If Lord Armstead called, others in his sphere would follow his example; his carriages would be placed at her disposal, his influence would be exerted to obtain some lucrative post for her husband, and Cecil—what might she not hope for her?

Of course Lord Armstead was in love with her, and was now proving most honourably what his intentions were. And the girl would never dream now of throwing such a chance away. Mrs. King grew more and more confident as she lay on the sofa that dull, autumn afternoon, while Cecil was quietly sewing and planning, thinking her mother was asleep.

In spite of her confidence that Cecil would never be mad enough to waste this magnificent opportunity, she dared not ask too many questions about Lord Armstead's visit, or seem too eagerly interested, lest she frightened the child, and put her on her guard.

Cecil was very silent, for she had a great deal to think of, and this Mrs. King misinterpreted into being a good sign.

How very kind Lord Armstead was! Tears came into Cecil's eyes when she thought of it,

and dropped upon the long trails of brambles that she was working.

His presence had brought such a consciousness of support, of unfailing trust; and even in his absence she felt sheltered and cheered by his spirit.

And now that she had spoken of earning money, though she had not been encouraged in the scheme, it did not seem half so bad as it looked when she had thought it over in solitude and sadness.

She could not borrow any more money from Lord Armstead. She had counted the notes some time after he had gone, having forgotten all about them at first, and found to her dismay that he had left two hundred pounds with her.

Of course she must not spend it, or she could never repay it; but the knowledge that she had plenty of money in hand, and need not worry herself about the butcher and baker for the present, brought back her courage and clearheadedness that had been almost fading away.

She knew what an outcry there would be if she suggested to her mother that she should teach, and it might cause pain and trouble for nothing, as very likely she would not be able to meet with an engagement.

She smiled as she looked at herself in a critical light, and thought that if she had had to engage a governess she certainly would not choose herself.

She passed over all her acquirements in stern review, and was disheartened for a time at the lamentable result of the inspection.

French! She could speak it and read it quite well, but she was certain she could not write a well-expressed, well-constructed French letter to save her life.

She had never mastered the grammar, and she knew that her writing would not be real French, but only translated English.

German! She shuddered at the idea, for she never remembered the genders, always forgot about the verb "round the corner," and made dreadful mistakes about moods.

She knew too little Italian to attempt it. Music she could sing and play beautifully. She had been flattered up to the skies for her voice; but how should she teach it?

She sketched prettily in water-colours, but hated perspective and freehand.

Then there was the terrible "English" that included so much. She tried to remember each English reign in succession, and was dismayed to find that all she knew of the kings and queens in which she was most interested could be written out on a few pages of note-paper; while the Saxon kings, and kings about whom there were no thrilling or tragic stories, Henry III., Henry IV., Edward IV., the Georges, and so on, she could remember nothing about them at all. She examined herself in grammar and geography, and the result was even worse. She nearly cried when she thought of the battles she and her governess had fought over analysis; arithmetic, beyond bills of parcels, had always been a *terra incognita* to her.

A small ray of light broke upon the gloom when Mr. King came home in the evening, and said that he had been offered a clerkship with two hundred a-year.

He was very much aggrieved and angry when Cecile looked pleased.

"It is an insult to offer such a thing! Do you imagine we can live on two hundred pounds a-year? Do you fancy I am going to exist in this dog-kennel for ever? Do you think I am going to be a paid servant?"

"But if you were in a Government office, or in the army, or a clergyman, you would be a paid servant," said Cecile; "and it is better than nothing. Oh, papa, don't refuse it! I am sure we can manage on four pounds a week!"

"You know nothing about it. This kind of life is killing your mother. She must have comforts, and two hundred a-year will not buy them. We have made a great mistake already in coming to this small house; if we had gone

to a good neighbourhood, and begun at once to live in decent style we should not have dropped so completely out of people's minds. Who is going to give anything worth taking to a man who lives in this place?"

"But this has come, and perhaps nothing else will come, and two hundred a-year is better than nothing at all!" urged Mrs. King.

"Something else is sure to come, and then it will be a nice thing if I have committed myself to this wretched clerkship, and have to refuse two thousand. You have no proper pride, Cecilia!"

"I think something better will come," said Mrs. King, remembering Lord Armstead and her castles-in-the-air. "Lord Armstead was here to-day, dear!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. King, looking up quickly. "I wish I had seen him. Did he bring any news? No doubt he has been interesting himself for me!"

"I did not see him," she answered, hesitatingly. "Cecile received him."

He looked at his daughter, who sat with burning cheeks, and eyes fixed upon her work. He misunderstood the symptoms—looked at his wife, raising his eyebrows interrogatively, met a warning glance, and was silent, marveling in himself as to what had come to pass.

A horrible fear had struck Cecile, bringing a hot blush of shame to her face, and a stab of pain to her heart. Would her father go to Lord Armstead and ask for help?

The idea was intolerable, when she thought of what had already happened—not only the large loan, but the incident that had befallen in the wood at Ashthorpe. She had a very strong instinct that she must not tell her father of the loan; but did not see how she could help it, if he should ask any questions.

She was quite sure that if he knew that they had all that money in the house he would at once launch into some wild speculation, and become recklessly extravagant in household expenditure.

The safest plan would be to sit still, and wait silently. Perhaps she expected something would turn up to-morrow.

But to-morrow came, and another day and then another; and weeks went by, and still nothing but hope deferred. One or two offers came of small salaries; but Mr. King, seeing that their money was evidently lasting somehow, refused them scornfully, still expecting the good fortune that never came. Mrs. King was ailing, missing the comforts to which she had been used all her life, and which were really necessities to her.

It was a very cold, damp, draughty house, and Cecile was dismayed to find what an enormous quantity of coal must be burned to keep their teeth from chattering and their hands from numbness, and how many of her bank-notes had been changed into gold and silver, and then disappeared altogether.

Mr. King once or twice brought a new friend into dinner, somebody from whom he was hoping to get an appointment; and when nothing came from his anticipations, he laid the blame on their wretched establishment. Of course, nobody would interest themselves in people who were waited on by a dirty, clumsy housemaid; anything was good enough for a man in his present position. It was the very worst economy to make such a wretched appearance. He believed that if they went to the West-end, and had a butler and footman, or even a boy in livery, it would turn out a most profitable speculation.

Nothing more had been heard of Lord Armstead. Mr. King had called at his town house, but it was shut up, and he would not write to him, to Cecile's great relief. He would not have it known that he was in any anxiety, and still waited for the expected two thousand a-year to drop into his mouth. But he grew gloomier and gloomier, and Mrs. King grew weaker and more plaintive, and Cecile had a weary time with such a heavy burden on her young shoulders.

Lord Armstead took it for granted that no news was good news. Cecil did not write, and he felt shy of intruding on her confidence by writing to her and asking questions. Then his old restlessness seized him. His home was very lonely now; he had spent his hours of solitude in fancying how it would look with Cecile there, filling his heart and life with her bright presence, longing after her with an all but uncontrollable yearning. He thought of her so much that he grew to miss her in the house as if she had lived there, and he could not endure the loneliness; so, after Christmas, he went away, to wander about the world again.

Then it occurred to Cecile that, as her father would not make any money, she must try. So one day she took her drawings to a picture shop, and after a painful hour spent in wandering up and down the neighbouring streets, while she was trying to steel herself for the ordeal, she went tired and almost crying with nervousness, and offered her poor little sketches to the dealer. Of course, he would not buy them; he was overstocked already with such subjects. They were prettily done for a young lady, he said, kindly, but quite worthless as a means of making money. Perhaps she could dispose of them among her friends.

It was so weary and disheartening and humiliating to walk out of the shop with her neatly put-up parcel. She was so tired and hungry, too, and it began to rain—a cold, sharp, drizzle—wetting the paper that was round her drawings; she dared not think of lunch, or of a cab; she was not used to omnibuses, and was afraid of getting into a wrong one; she must plod those weary miles of muddy streets again.

"Why, Cecile!" cried a cheerful voice, "were you going to walk past me? I declare I shouldn't have known you, dear; you look so pale and thin!"

An angel from Heaven would not have been more welcome to Cecile at the moment than kind, practical homely Mrs. Leigh, in her waterproof, unsymmetrically distended by the sealskin jacket beneath; her fat, red face, and country-made bonnet looking so familiar.

"I am up for two or three days with Charlie about his teeth. We are going back first thing in the morning, but I have had so much to do I have never had time to find you out. We are just going in here to have something to eat, so you come too, and I shall hear all about you."

They had a comfortable little room all to themselves. Mrs. Leigh was hungry and boundlessly hospitable, and Cecile warmed and brightened under the kindly influence of hot coffee and her genial friend.

She knew Mrs. Leigh's gossiping propensities, so avoided going into unnecessary details about her father's affairs. But she told her that she must do something to make an income sufficient to help to keep house; that her drawings had failed; that she wished if possible to keep her jewellery in case of emergency, and she did so want advice.

Mrs. Leigh knew a great deal more than Cecile expected, for she knew Mr. King's character pretty well, and could put two and two together from what Cecile had told.

"Of course, you must teach, or go out as companion," she said; "never mind what your parents say. You cannot go on in this way for ever."

"But I know so little. I can teach nothing," said Cecile, dolefully.

"You will manage capitally as soon as you begin. I was a governess myself once. You will learn as you go on, and you must know more to begin with than your pupils do. You have not to teach straight out of your head, you know. You will have books in your hand. We will go now to one of the agencies for governesses, and put your name down. I will be your reference. Meantime, let us see if there are any likely advertisements in the Times."

Mrs. Leigh's hopefulness and energy were infectious, Cecile was brimming with interest

and longing to begin at once. They found one advertisement that sounded well, and Mrs. Leigh insisted on Cecile answering it at once before setting out for the agency.

"Resident governess required for five children, eight to sixteen. Good French accent required. Salary £70. Apply to Lady C., Wood's Library, Guelph-street."

"Seventy pounds! That does not seem very much," said Cecile.

"I am only afraid it is just twice too much," said Mrs. Leigh. "They will expect something very good for that. But we may as well try. People often prefer a lady to a regular trained governess."

Cecile went home with a guilty secret locked in her breast; but when she saw her mother's pale, worn face and wistful eyes, as she listened for her husband's step, waiting for the good news that never came, she felt some part of her burden removed by the thought that, at any rate, a step was taken that might lead to something tangible. Seventy pounds a year was not much, and she had heard of other situations at the Agency that only offered thirty, and even less; but she expected that her moving would at least show her father that things could not go on as they had been doing lately; that if he would not stoop to take a small salary, his daughter must set him the example.

And all this time, in the midst of the arid desert of her life, there was one little green fragrant spot in her heart, where a sweet fresh spring was hidden, ready to bubble up when the hindering obstacles should be removed, and even now doing a daily work in moistening and vivifying the dry round of daily cares and soils. The present was too full and too intensely real for Cecile to have time to look to the future. She rarely ever wondered when Norman Leigh would come back; she never thought of marrying him. She didn't allow herself to think of the past; she resolutely steeled her will against retrospective longings, not even suffering herself to remember.

One night, between and waking, she thought she was in the drawing-room at Ashtorpe, with its beautiful costly furniture and silken hangings, its vases and pots filled with flowers, and the lovely view from the long windows over green lawn, and woods, and beyond the grey keep of Armstead Castle; and suddenly she found she was in the little bare bedroom in Beaconsfield-street, and that there were no gardens or lawns or woods near—only tiles and chimney-pots and dreary building-sites, and for an hour she felt that the iron had entered into her soul; and she sobbed herself to sleep, and went about next day, sad and heavy-eyed for once.

But often she had an hour's respite from her weary, anxious thoughts. Sometimes it was when the winter afternoon was closing in, and she happened to be close by the fire with her work. She would lay it aside, and sit down upon the hearthrug, clasping her knees and gazing into the red coals, and think in a dreamy way of Norman, his blue eyes and his bright frank smile, and the unspoken love that she knew he bore in his heart. A sweet, calm smile would shine in her eyes, lit up by the flickering fire, as she thought of one heart, far away, but loving her so dearly all this time. She trusted him so fully that she did not even know that she trusted, and she felt warm and happy and protected, enfolded in the spirit-arm of his love.

(To be concluded in our next.)

A BACHELOR and a spinster who had been schoolmates in youth, and were about the same age, met in after-years, and the lady chancing to remark that "men live a great deal faster than women," the bachelor returned:—"Yes, Maria. The last time we met we were each twenty-four years old. Now I'm over forty, and I hear that you haven't reached thirty yet." They never met again.

## CHERRY'S MISTAKE.

"WHERE'S Cherry? Cherry will have to pick the strawberries for lunch."

"Where is she, indeed? I'm sure I don't know now, but she's been crying in the corner all the morning because papa has discharged old Mackenzie."

And Miss Charlotte dusted plaques and shook up cushions vigorously.

So provoking to have the housemaid ill, and young Frank Waters coming to Westdale! Just now, too, she regretted the absence of old Mackenzie, who had been Squire Marston's gardener and man-of-all-work for fifteen years; he was so good-natured and accommodating in an emergency—would turn his hand to anything, and put everybody in good humour with his drollery.

But Mac was growing old, and the squire needed a younger man on the place. Old Mac would remain only to instruct Tom Hall in his duties, and foolish Cherry, the younger sister, was crying because her old friend and comrade was going away from Westdale.

"Well, she must pick the strawberries," said Ethel, the beauty. "There is no one else. I'm sure I can't go out in the hot sun with my complexion, and I've only time to dress and do my hair before Mr. Waters gets here. Is there plenty of jelly for the cold chicken? And did you make the macaroons, Lottie?"

"Don't you worry about my part," said Lottie, flourishing her feather-duster. "See that you do yours as well," with a significant look.

Ten minutes afterwards a young girl walked rapidly down the garden-path with a tin-pail in her hand.

It was eleven o'clock, and a fervid heat was pouring down on her pretty hat.

"Excused from my lessons to pick strawberries for Ethel's bean, under such a sun as this! I'd quite as lief be reading French with Miss Stanton in the school-room. So much for being the youngest! Why can't Ethel pick her own strawberries, I'd like to know? Oh, dear! I don't mean to be cross, but everything goes wrong lately. Dear old Mac, who taught me to walk, and who has always made me swings, and fixed my garden-beds, and cheered me up when I was in trouble—he must be sent off for hateful old Tom Hall! I know he's young, but I shall call him *old*! And now this other strange man—Ethel's bean—will be here, and I'm told to 'keep out of the way,' and Miss Stanton and I must skulk away to the school-room, while he and Ethel take up the whole of the house! I suppose he's nice, though. I should like to see him! My! how fine the strawberries are!"

Cherry had reached the strawberry-bed, which lay unsheltered by bush or tree, its great, crimson berries ripening sweetly in the glowing heat.

Pushing back her hat, she knelt down among them.

The tendrils of her chestnut hair clung moist about her young forehead. Her cheeks were flushed by the great warmth; her round lips red as the beautiful fruit over which she bent.

She worked with energy for awhile, but at last paused and surveyed her pail, which was but a third full.

"Oh! dear, what slow work! and how hot it is! I shall never get the pail full!"

She took off her straw hat and fanned her red cheeks.

Just then she espied a young man lying under a tree near the roadside.

"There's that old Tom Hall now!—and I'm going to set him to work. Come here!" she called, authoritatively.

The young man rose quickly from the green grass and approached the imperious young lady.

"You may help me pick these strawberries. You will have to work if you come here, I can tell you!"

The young man bowed, and went down

obediently upon his knees in the strawberry-bed.

"Papa don't allow any *shirking*! You can't dress like that here, either!" added Miss Cherry, surveying the attire of the new gardener, which seemed to be of too good a cut and fine quality for a person in Tom Hall's station of life.

"Indeed!"

"No! Old Mac was in his shirt-sleeves and overalls, early and late, ever since I can remember. He's been with us sixteen years, ever since I was a baby, and he's been *faithful*!" said Cherry, with some very like a sob in her voice. "Do you know anything about gardening?"

"Something!"

"Well, you'll have to know everything! Papa is very particular, especially about his young trees. He'll be sorry for sending Mac off—see if he isn't!" concluded Cherry, talking to herself, as she wandered to the other side of the bed.

Whatever else Tom Hall might fail in, he could pick strawberries very rapidly and nicely, and surveying the fast-filling pail, Miss Cherry condescended to be more gracious.

"Thank you! I'll let you finish; you get along so nicely. Perhaps you will please papa. I think very likely," she added, with a sigh.

Retreating a short distance to the shade of an apple-tree, she fanned herself with her hat, and surveyed the prospect.

Tom Hall, looking toward the apple-tree, saw a patch of *lapis lazuli* sky, boughs of emerald hung with pale green spheres, and beneath them a graceful, weary little figure, in a dress of grey cambric, with abundant chestnut hair shading a pretty face.

In a few minutes he came up with the pail.

"Have you done?" asked Cherry, arousing herself. "Oh, dear! I'm so glad *thn's* finished! I don't often have such disagreeable tasks to do," she continues, more confidentially; "but my sister is expecting company—a gentleman from town—and she's very particular to have a nice lunch. Ethel wouldn't burn *her* complexion, though, if Frank Waters never had a strawberry in his life!" she added, more to herself. "And I hope he won't want any more while he stays here, if I have to pick them! Heigh-ho! You'd better not let papa see you lying on the grass; you might not make a very good impression on him," she said, as she nodded good-bye, and started for the house.

For her companion, looking quite warm, and with moist curls of dark hair twining almost as tightly as her own about the forehead, retreated to the roadside tree and threw himself down again, good-humouredly smiling, and apparently not in the least offended by the candour of this frank young lady.

"I don't believe he'll suit pa!" she soliloquized. "He's too nice; he'll never get right down to hard work like poor Mac. He did pick the strawberries nicely, though. Glad I met him."

And Cherry entered the house, and gladly delivered up her fragrant burden.

"You and Miss Stanton had better take your lunch in the schoolroom; then you needn't dress."

"Lottie," cried Cherry, "can't I even see him?"

"I'm willing, but Ethel says—"

"I don't care what Ethel says! I shall come down. Can't I, papa? can't I have lunch with you?"

"Certainly, certainly! You will do; you look very well," answered the squire, with whom Cherry was a favourite.

And so, when Cherry had hurriedly bathed her forehead and hands in cool water, and braided and tied with a fresh ribbon her abundant chestnut hair, she came quietly into the dining-room a little later; but her father called her cheerfully to a place beside him.

"My youngest daughter, Cherry, Mr. Waters."

A frank, pleasant face, with dark hair curling tightly about a broad, white forehead, and

a very good-natured smile. Cherry lifted her broad lids, and gave a little gasp.

"The young lady and I have already met. Let me give you some of the strawberries, Miss Cherry. They are very nice."

And so as the meal was quite without formality, "Tom Hall" heaped Cherry's saucer with strawberries, and began talking to her in the most charming manner. But poor Cherry, from turning scarlet to the tips of her fingers, turned so pitifully white, realising her dreadful mistake, that it was almost evident that the meal was almost a blank to her.

She got away as soon as she could, ran down into the garden, crept under a syringabush and cried.

Pretty soon Mr. Waters was on his knees beside her.

"Pray—pray don't take your little mistake so much to heart! It did no harm, and I was very much amused."

"You—you are very good!" sobbed Cherry, "but I never can get over it: and Ethel will never forgive me when she knows—"

"Then we won't tell her," said Frank, cheerfully, and Cherry was sure, then, that he was nice. "It is our secret. Only when I say 'strawberries' you are to be very, very good to me."

So he won the child out of her tears and fears, and leading her down the elm-shaded path, fanned her with a huge leaf, and chatting charmingly, made her smile till her tears were dried.

"Why, Cherry, child, where did you see Mr. Waters before?" asked Ethel, coming up, and looking a little peculiar.

"Oh, just by the roadside yonder," answered Frank, so carelessly, that Ethel thought nothing more of the matter.

But she observed that he was very attentive to Cherry, and she continued to observe it during the three days of the gentleman's stay.

And that was not all, for Frank Waters came again and again to Westdale during the summer, and when Cherry's seventeenth birthday came, made a formal proposal for her hand which was shyly accepted, and now they are happy as the day is long, all through Cherry's MISTAKE. E. S. K.

## FACETIÆ.

THE evil that men do lives after them. Even when an amateur cornetist dies he leaves the fatal instrument behind.

SOMETHING THAT ONE WOULD RATHER NOT HAVE SAID.—Some one complimented the celebrated actress, Madame Dennis, on the way in which she had just played a particular part.—"To play it well," she said, "one should be young and beautiful."—Ah, madame, replied her admirer, "you are a striking proof of the contrary!"

A YOUNG HORREBUL.—Little Tommy, on returning from school, brought home a copy-book all blotted with ink.—"You untidy boy," said his mother, "to spoil your nice copy-books in that way; you shall be punished for this."—Well, mamma, was the reply, "it wasn't my fault; there's a negro boy who sits next to me in class, and his nose bled as he was looking over my page."

CLUTTERBUCK'S aunt told Sir W. that she thought Bath would do her good.—"It is very odd," said Sir W., "but that is the very thing that I was going to recommend to you. I will write the particulars of your case to a very clever man there, in whose hands you will be well taken care of." The lady, furnished with the letter, sat off, and on arriving said to her confidant, "Long as Sir Walter has attended me he has never explained to me what ails me. I have a great mind to open his letter, and see what he has stated of my case to the Bath physician." In vain her friend represented to her the breach of confidence this would be. She opened the letter and read, "Dear Davis, keep this old lady three weeks, and send her back again."

THE private secretary is the person who makes everything public.

DID you ever see a fisherman try to walk a rod and reel?

MUSICIANS are in the habit of slurring some notes; but they all speak well of good "tenors."

IF there is ever a time in a man's life when he is tempted to lie, it is when the assessor begins to ask personal questions.

"You are setting us a bad example," as the algebra class said, when the teacher wrote a hard equation on the board.

FOOTBALLERS are generally considered plucky fellows, but none of them get through with a sparring-match without fainting.

FORTUNE knocks at every man's door once in a life. But in some cases it only steps long enough to leave a printed circular.

A MAN has succeeded in making a perfect artificial egg. We would like to see the woman who could beat it.

A complimentary vote is something that is thrown at a man to make him feel bad because he is not quite popular enough to be elected.

TWO lawyers called each other "dirty puppies" in court the other day. Neither was on oath, but their evidence was deemed conclusive.

AN American editor lustily demands: "Give us the whipping-post!" A rival has no doubt he richly deserves it, but very few editors get their deserts in this world.

A LITTLE boy astonished his companions the other day by telling them that he had "a spanking team at his house." An excited crowd of boys had walked nearly home with him, when one of them asked, "What d'ye call 'em?"—"Pa and ma," was the reply.

"Pa, did you say those cigars in your coat-pocket were too strong?"—"Yes, my son. Why?"—"Oh, 'cause they broke so easy when I tried them; I was afraid I had misunderstood you."

A MAN said on his dying bed that he had never written a line he cared to have erased. People in his district were so proud of him that there was some talk of building him a monument, until it was discovered that he could not even write his own name.

A DEAR old lady was pitched out of her carriage with her coachman on the top of her. On picking her up she said, "I am not much hurt, but have learnt from experience the meaning of the advertisement for a coachman, 'a light weight preferred.'"

"WHAT's that child crying so for?"—"I don't know. He's been crying for an hour."—"I thought you said you didn't know what he was crying for."—"So I did; and I don't."—"But you said he'd been crying for an hour!"—"Oh, I see! Well, I think he won't get it."

PRUDENT PARISIAN HOUSEHOLDER:—"Hi, there, stop! What do you ask for your coal?"—Peripatetic dealer:—"Three francs a hundred kilos, sir."—Housekeeper:—"Weigh me a thousand kilos, and shoot it here."—Dealer (hesitatingly):—"Certainly, monsieur; but—well, ahem!—the fact is that, when we weigh it in the presence of the customer, the price is three francs and a-half."

AN old lady recently received a new bonnet. Soon after she was missed, and her absence became so protracted that the family grew anxious, and instituted a search. Finally she was discovered in her room, sitting quietly with the new bonnet on. Her daughter exclaimed, "Why, mother, what are you doing here?"—"Go along down," the old lady replied;—"I am only getting used to this thing, so that I shall not be thinking about it all church-time to-morrow."

WALLS have ears—that is, those walls which support a telephone.

THE RULE OF THREE.—For the third person to clear out.

"YOUR language is wholly unequal for," as the publisher told the author whose works failed to sell.

"You are beneath my notice," as the balloonist said to the receding crowd of gaping citizens.

THE only time when a man is generous in drawing the line between his own and his neighbour's property is when he shovels the snow off the pavement.

MADAM B., to a young journalist:—"Yes, I know you write for the newspapers, but as the articles are not signed, how can yours be recognised?"—"Oh, madam, nothing could be easier. All the best ones are mine."

"Haven't seen you for the last day or so," said one journalist to another;—"Have you been indisposed?"—"No; it is my washer-woman who is indisposed."—"Is she very ill?"—"She is not ill at all. She is indisposed to bring back my shirt."

UNCLE DICK (an eminent R.A.):—"Well, Johnny, and what are you going to be?" Johnny:—"I shall be a judge, like papa." Uncle Dick:—"Ah, but you haven't brains enough, my boy." Johnny:—"Oh, then, I'll be an artist, like you."

FAZZ, just returned from a long journey, to his brother, who had just got married:—"I say, Jack, what did you marry that frightfully ugly woman for?" Jack:—"I did not look at her exterior—it was for her inward beauty that I married her." Fred:—"For goodness sake, Jack, turn her inside out."

THE maiden's point of view:—"Mamma (to Maud, who has been with her brother to the play, and is full of it):—"But was there no love in the piece, then?" Maud:—"Love? Oh, dear, no, mamma! How could there be? The principal characters were husband and wife, you know!"

"DAVID slew Goliath with a sling," said the Sunday-school teacher impressively. Then, turning to a little boy at the foot of the class, who was stuffing paper wads down his neighbour's neck, he asked, severely, "What did I say, John Henry?"—"Goliath was slayed by a sling, an' Davy gev it to him," was the prompt and awful reply.

## A TALE OF TELEGRAPH TICKING.

A well-to-do young man recently married and started on his bridal tour. The happy young couple were breakfasting at a small restaurant. During the repast two smart "mashers" came into the room and seated themselves opposite the contracting parties. They were telegraph operators. By delicate poisoning of their knife and fork they were able to make sounds in close imitation of telegraphy. In the mystic language of the key one said unto the other,—

"Ain't she a daisy, though?"  
The party thus addressed replied by clicking off,—

"Wouldn't you like to kiss her, the little angel?"

"Wonder who that old idiot is that she has married?"

"Some counter-jumper, I suppose," replied the other.

The groom stood it until forbearance ceased to be a virtue, when he also balanced his knife and click, click it went in rapid succession. It was intelligible to the very cute twain that had recently made fun of its author.

When interpreted it read,—

"DEAR SIR,—I am superintendent of the telegraph on which you work. You will please send to headquarters and resign your positions at once."

"Yours ———"

## SOCIETY.

THE State ball and concert-room at Buckingham Palace has been lighted most successfully with electricity, and at the last State ball there were about five hundred Swan lights.

MARRIAGES are arranged between Viscount Melgund, eldest son of the Earl and Countess of Minto, and Miss Mary Grey; also between Alice, second daughter of General Sir Henry de Bathe, Bart., and Mr. Harry Lawson.

At the coronation of the Czar a very costly toilette was worn by Lady Thornton, wife of the British Ambassador. It was arranged à la princesse, in emerald green velvet and turquoise blue satin, embroidered with silver—the corsage and train being of velvet and lovely duchesse; petticoat of satin and silver, trimmed with very handsome chenille, and feathers of the two colours on skirt and bodice. The shadings were perfect, and made the most becoming and elegant Court dress. The Misses Thornton, too, wore charmingly simple toilettes, composed of white satin duchesse, bodices and trains, with petticoats of chenille and white satin stripes. These were trimmed with a very wide flounce of poppies and ferns, one in pale pink and the other in maize, each to correspond with the separate turnings of the trains, which were fastened on onesoulder, handsomely trimmed with thick cords of white silk and chenille, one corner of the train turning back with large bouquets of same flowers as on the petticoat.

Some of the recent floral decorations at receptions have been very beautiful. The Foreign Office was most profusely decorated on the occasion of the Countess Granville's reception. The grand staircase was most superbly arranged with graceful palms and various other handsome foliage plants and ferns, intermixed with flowers of every conceivable shade; the fire places and mantelpieces in the reception rooms were also very artistically set off with palms, ferns, and choice orchids, and other rare exotics; but the most elegant part of the decorations was seen in Lord Granville's private room, which was specially set apart for royalty; here the tops of the cabinets were covered with undulating banks of green lycopodium, on these were arranged lovely beds of lilies-of-the-valley. So naturally were they placed that one could fancy they had grown there; other spaces were covered with choice roses, orchids, stephanotis, and various other flowers. The opinion generally expressed was that the decorations were never before equalled, and we hear that the caterer has been specially complimented on his success.

The first meet of the Four-in-Hand Club took place in Hyde park on Wednesday, May 30th. It was well attended, and attracted a large number of spectators. The Princess of Wales watched the coaches from a space which had been reserved for her a little way down the drive. The Prince of Wales, together with Lord and Lady Cadogan, was on Lord Castlereagh's coach, while Lord Charles Bessford, whose coach followed that of Lord Castlereagh, was honoured with the company of the Princes Albert Victor and George of Wales. The lead was taken by Lord Maclesfield, who is one of the oldest members of the committee. The coaches drove round the park, past Apsley House and Albert Gate, to Kensington Gardens, and after passing the Albert Memorial several of them fell out of the ranks and returned for another tour of the park. Others went on to Hurlingham, where luncheon had been provided for upwards of one hundred guests. The Four-in-Hand and Coaching Clubs had, as usual, inclosures reserved for them at Ascot, and both clubs will hold at least one more meet in Hyde park before the close of the London season.

## STATISTICS.

In the United Kingdom the loss to the Government by worn silver withdrawn from circulation because of deficiency of weight caused by wear and tear amounted last year to £28,000.

PAWNBROKING IN FRANCE.—An official document just issued with regard to the pawnbroking business in France, which is entirely in the hands of the State, shows that there is at the present time only forty-two establishments or *Monts-de-Piété* throughout the country. In nearly three-fourths of the departments there exist none whatever. The most important is that of Paris, after which come those of Lyons, Bordeaux, Marseilles, Lille, and Rouen. In these six branches the same last represent 82 per cent. of the total for the whole of France. Last year 3,012,571 articles were received in pledge in the different establishments, representing 32,995,948fr. lent. The average sum was 20fr. for Paris, and 14fr. for the departments. There were 1,224,806 loans ranging between 5fr. and 10fr., 906,829 under 5fr., and 880,936 from 11fr. to 1,000fr. and upwards.

## GEMS.

THERE are certain manners which, learnt in good society, are of that force that, if a person have them, he or she must be considered everywhere welcome, though without beauty, wealth, or genius.

WHATEVER busies the mind without corrupting it has at least this use, that it rescues the day from idleness; and he that is never idle will not often be vicious—indeed, if wisely busy, he cannot be so.

HE that has never known adversity is but half acquainted with others or with himself. Constant success shows us but one side of the world, for, as it surrounds us with friends who will tell us only our merits, so it silences those enemies from whom alone we can learn our defects.

It is a truth awaiting full recognition that the actual learning how to use the hands dexterously and accurately is a positive gain to the mental faculties. The trained eye and the trained hand are the best preparation for the trained thought. They give the first idea of system, order, accuracy, and the effective carrying out of a plan.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TO CLEAN GREASY BOTTLES.—Boil 4oz. of Castile soap, in one gallon of soft water, until it is quite dissolved, and then add 8oz. of carbonate of soda, 1oz. of borax, 7oz. of ammonia, 3oz. alcohol, 2oz. sulphuric ether. When these ingredients are all thoroughly mixed by boiling together, the preparation, which is most efficacious for cleansing dirty and greasy bottles, is ready for use. Care must be taken to thoroughly rinse them, after making use of this mixture for cleansing purposes.

MONT BLANC PUDDING.—Boil six or seven large apples as you would for sauce, stir in 2oz. of butter, a little sugar, and the grated rind and juice of half a lemon. Cover the edge of a baking dish with a layer of puff paste, well butter the inside of the dish, and line it plentifully with fresh breadcrumbs. Fill it with the apple mixture, and cover well with more breadcrumbs. Scatter little bits of butter over the top, and a sifting of sugar, and let it be in the oven until the paste is done, and the top of the pudding slightly browned. Whip the whites of three eggs to a stiff froth, and pile them roughly in spoonfuls over the breadcrumbs at the top of the pudding, but not over the border of paste; sift a spoonful of white sugar over it, and put it back into the oven just long enough to set the eggs without colouring them.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

A HINT.—The soiled covering of a chair may be covered cheaply and prettily by two of the cheap, but durable squares of lace used for pillow covers and tidies; line them with some bright colour, and fasten securely with long pins to the seat and back of the chair. Small squares can be lined and fastened to the arms. If the chair is a handsome colour, even if a good deal faded, no lining is required. These covers can be taken off so easily, and can be cleaned so successfully, that they are really useful. The coarse, strong thread of which they are woven renders them more serviceable than cheap crêtonne. For a common chair, squares of Turkish towelling, pinned on in the same way, do very well.

OPPORTUNITIES.—A lesson we all need to learn is to grasp opportunities the instant they appear. A person was walking along the sea-shore, gathering the treasures which were left on the sands. He was searching in a dreamy way, listlessly looking here and there. Suddenly the waves left at his feet a shell more beautiful than any he had found. "That shell is safe enough," he said; "I can pick it up at my leisure." But, as he waited, a higher wave swept along the beach, recaptured the shell, and bore it back to the bosom of the ocean. Is not that like many of our opportunities? Seemingly they are providentially cast at our feet. The chance to do good seems so wholly within our reach that we think it safe to attend to other matters first. We delay for a moment, and, when we turn again, the opportunity is gone.

A WALL POCKET.—One of the prettiest of wall pockets is made of a large Japanese fan. That portion of the fan which is covered with the paper covered on both sides with silk, satin, or silk, in any colour desired. This may be hand-painted, embroidered or plain. The edges of the covering, where they meet at the edges of the fan, are turned in and neatly whipped together. The pocket-piece, which is placed upon one side, is lined with the same covering as is put upon the fan, and may be made of canvas, a piece of plaited straw or an old hat; in the case of its being straw, it may be brushed over with black or brown paint, or gilded. In the centre of the pocket-piece is put an ornamental bunch of wheat, rice and dried grasses, with some bits of ribbon of a pretty contrasting colour. This pocket is a little larger than the fan, so that when its edges are tacked to the edges of the fan, it will bulge out slightly as a pocket ought to. The sewing along the edge is covered with a heavy silk cord; a picture cord will do, and pretty knots of ribbon can be added. The fan is then suspended by a loop of ribbon.

A CURE FOR STYES.—Among the most troublesome and often noticed eye affections are what are known as hordeolum, or common sty. Dr. Louis FitzPatrick, in the *Lancet*, differs from some of his professional brethren who persist in ordering the application of poultices, bathing with tepid water, &c. These no doubt do good in the end, but such applications have the great disadvantage of prolonging the career of these unsightly sores, and encourage the production of fresh ones. Dr. FitzPatrick has found, after many trials, the local application of tincture of iodine exert a well-marked influence in checking the growth. This is by far preferable to the nitrate of silver, which makes an unsightly mark, and often fails in its object. The early use of the iodine acts as a prompt abortive. To apply it the lids should be held apart by the thumb and index finger of the left hand, while the iodine is painted over the inflamed papilla with a fine camel-hair pencil. The lids should not be allowed to come in contact until the part touched is dry. A few such applications in the twenty-four hours is sufficient.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MATHILDA M.—We regret we cannot aid you.

F. B. R.—In about six months if you worked hard you could qualify for the appointment.

J. E. H.—We cannot recall any letters from the locality named.

F.—It was a palpalis misprint. You are more nice than wise.

FORGET-ME-NOT.—AEI on lockets means "For ever." It is a Greek word.

ELLIE.—The battle of Waterloo was fought on the 18th of June, 1814.

FRED F.—Leave your moustache to nature; it will grow all in good time.

L. W.—You are probably suffering from neuralgia. You had better consult a respectable medical man.

GODFREY.—The girl is laughing at you. She would appreciate a little more manliness on your part.

SAUCY BOY.—Your parents were quite correct in punishing you in the way they did, even according to your own version of the matter.

ANNE D. H.—There is no particular meaning attached to it, but it is very objectionable, and should not be permitted.

MARTHA.—They are little pinners and pull the hair out by the root; can be obtained at any fancy shop.

ALLIE.—1. Wear gloves throughout the hot weather and wash in tepid water. 2. Keep the nails trimmed. A file is preferable to a knife and ivory to steel.

ANXIOUS MOTHER.—The air of Manchester would be too cold and damp; a warm dry air, such as that of Bath or Torquay, would be preferable.

B. L. M.—Precipitated chalk is the best and simplest dentifrice. A toothpick should always be used after meals.

RISDA.—The modern capital of Russia is St. Petersburg on the Neva, founded by Peter the Great. Moscow was the old capital.

E. F. E.—The poetry is hardly up to the mark. Read the works of the great poets and study the laws of versification.

AMPERE.—The modern novel is, no doubt, a descendant of the old songs of the troubadours and improvisators of France and Italy.

DALDA.—The proper pronunciation of the word is "acoustics," not acoustics. It is derived from a Greek word meaning to hear, and is the science of sound.

ALMA R.—1. The Opera of "William Tell" was composed by Rossini. 2. A black hat with scarlet flowers would suit a brunette.

HAREBELL.—Your signature in the language of flowers means "retirement," pink geranium "preference," and mignonette "your qualities surpass your beauty."

DENNIS MCCARTHY.—The history of agrarianism in Ireland has yet to be written, and, to do it justice, would require the patience and impartiality of a Hallam. The subject cannot be discussed in this page.

JAMES F.—1. The moerschmum can be cleaned by rubbing it carefully with a piece of crepe, which will take out the scratches. 2. Address the editor of the *Evening Standard*, Catherine-street, Strand.

X. Y. Z. R.—1. The price of "Hunted for Her Money" would be, post free, 3s. 3d.; "Trevelyan," post free, 1s. 10d.; "Diamond Bracelet," post free, 3s. 9d., and "Expectations," post free, 3s. 5d.; 2. We do not propose to re-issue the stories named.

LITTLE BLUE EYES.—Make your friend a little work-basket. Buy a small straw basket, and trim it with blue or cardinal silk or satin, making a small pincushion at one end and two little compartments at the other for cottons, &c.

AMORETTA.—The young fellow proposed in a manly straightforward manner, and was fully deserving of consideration at your hands. It is not improbable you will regret very much hereafter the cavalier manner in which you have thought fit to treat him.

BRIAN BAIR.—Your education, judging from your letter, would be too defective to ensure the situation you mention, but if you are determined to try you might write to the matron of St. Thomas's Hospital, London, S.E.

S. L.—The works of the philosopher you name have been translated by a great many authors. That published by Henry G. Bohn, York-street, Covent Garden, London, is as good as any.

G. V. W.—The great Duke of Wellington is stated to have said that high interest and bad security go together. We should advise you to invest your money in Government Securities, and certainly cannot undertake to recommend any particular public company.

B. W. F.—Silence is golden. It is always the best policy not to repeat anything we hear to the discredit of others, no matter how intimate the person to whom it is imparted. Human nature is proverbially prone to exaggeration, and the cynical remark of La Rochefoucauld that there is something in the misfortunes of our best friends not absolutely displeasing to us has a pretty wide application.

ROSE.—1. Forster's or Kelly's would be the best. Any bookseller could get them. 2. Yes, with practice. 3. Leave it alone; take plenty of exercise, drink no beer; eat no potatoes, little bread, and vegetables; no pastry, rice, cornflower, or sugar.

A. C. R.—One of the London daily papers would be the best medium. There is no special form of words. State the facts clearly and briefly, and give full address. If not very long the advertisement would cost from 3s. 6d. to 5s.

ANXIOUS ENQUIRER.—1. Food should never be lifted to the mouth with the knife, always with the fork; both knife and fork should be held only by the handle; the forefinger should never be allowed to travel down to the blade of the knife or the prongs of the fork, and in eating the elbows should always be kept as near the sides as possible. 2. The fashionable way is for the umbrella to be carried across the body with the handle on the right shoulder. 3. Yes; if they are clever and their work attractive. 4. Writing moderate; practise from good copies.

AVIA.—You set by no means an easy task to tell you the greatest musical genius of modern times. There are few subjects on which wider divergence of opinion might be entertained. We can only give an individual opinion, which is, that for grandeur of conception, variety of treatment, and power to sway the mind—for it must be remembered that music is an intellectual more than a sensuous pleasure—Beethoven has never been surpassed. He remains in our view as far beyond those who want before him, and those who have come after him as Shakespeare did in the drama.

S. M. B. T.—Your trouble arises from the fact that you do not pay proper attention to what you read. In looking for startling situations you skim over the less exciting portions of a narrative, and have thus acquired a habit of reading in the most superficial manner. If, as you say, you have no "taste to read good literature," you should endeavour to acquire a liking for literature which is not only elevating but instructive. If you do this you will soon find that by having something to think of, your memory will be not so much at fault as you may think it is.

## A WOMAN'S HEART.

Be still, oh wayward heart, and make no sign,  
His footstep draweth nigh;  
Chain as with steel those quickening throbs divine,  
When he is by.

Hang out no crimson signal, conscious cheek,  
For his quick eyes to see.  
Betray not what my lips are slow to speak;  
It must not be.

If e'er he comes on bended knee to sue,  
I shall not turn away;  
But till he speaks the words that lovers do,  
My heart I sway.

My wayward heart that fain would break away,  
And seek its very own;  
But, foolish wayward heart, until that day  
Be thou as stone.

M. M.

F. G. R. S.—1. In commencing a letter to a gentleman friend it is customary to say, "Dear Mr. Burke," unless he is an old friend, and then it should be "My dear Mr. Burke." 2. The upper left hand corner of the visiting card is turned down to signify that the call was made in person. 3. It is usually customary for a gentleman to write first to a young lady; but if she should wish some information from him, or have some similar reason for opening a correspondence, there would be no impropriety in her writing. 4. It is not necessary to ask a person to write each time a letter is answered, politeness leading one to conclude that a reply will be made in due season.

FLEXMORE.—1. A letter of introduction or recommendation should never be sealed, as the bearer to whom it is given ought to know the contents. 2. In writing a letter, the answer, to which is of more benefit to yourself than the person to whom you write, enclose a postage stamp for the reply. 3. It is thought impolite to use a half sheet of paper in formal letters. 4. As a matter of economy and convenience for business purposes, however, it is customary to have the address of the business man printed at the top of the sheet, and a single leaf is often used.

P. S. F.—It is only an exemplification of Scott's lines:—  
"Oh, what a tangled web we weave  
When first we practise to deceive."

If you had not in the first place told your lover you were a lady by birth and position, you would not, now that he wishes really to marry, have to make the humiliating confession that you are only a dependent. But, come what may, be frank now and tell him everything. The experience of ages goes to show that the straightforward course is the best.

D. M. O.—To win the affection of a parrot treat it with harshness, for should you approach it with harsh voice and threatening gestures, it will immediately stand on the defensive. Use soft words and kind looks, and in a short time the bird will be willing to listen to you and watch your actions. Bird-fanciers claim that these pets will learn sooner from women than men, and quicker still from children. The best mode of teaching the bird to speak is to keep quite out of sight while giving the lesson, speak the words distinctly, and pay particular attention to the fact that the words forming the sentence should be linked together—that is, let each word glide into the next as smoothly as possible. Keep the

bird in good condition by feeding it in the following manner:—In one cup of the cage always keep canary seed, and in the other a mash made by soaking stale bread in warm water for a quarter of an hour, after which it should be squeezed out as dry as possible and again moistened with sufficient boiling milk to render it soft, but not sloppy. Do not give meat, bread, and coffee, or any table scraps.

LILIAN.—1. Several of the passengers of the *Forfarshire* steamer, wrecked on its voyage from Hull to Dundee, were rescued on the 6th September, 1833, by Grace Darling and her father, who ventured out in a tremendous sea from the Outer Fern Lighthouse, but thirty-eight out of fifty-three persons on board the ill-fated vessel perished. The cable boat in which they were rescued is shown at the Fisheries Exhibition, and attracts great crowds. 2. It is claimed that the following receipt will make the hair grow better than any other. It is rather expensive:—Eau-de-cologne, 2 ounces; tincture of cantharides, 2 drachms; oil of rosemary, oil of nutmeg, and oil of lavender, each 10 drops. To be rubbed into the head every night. 3. Fair writing, but sloping; it the wrong way gives it an affected look. 4. The two substances are about equally injurious to the skin. Rub your face well with a coarse towel after washing, and have a little oatmeal in the water.

VERA.—To make chicken-salad, take two large cold fowls, either boiled or roasted, the yolks of nine hard-boiled eggs, half pint each of sweet oil and vinegar, one gill of mustard, one teaspoonful each of Cayenne pepper and salt, and two large heads of fine celery. Cut the meat of the fowls from the bones in small pieces, and the pieces of celery into pieces about an inch long. Mix these two ingredients well together, cover them and set them away. Mash the yolks of the eggs to a sand-like paste, and mix them with the oil, vinegar, mustard, pepper, and salt. These are to be stirred for a long time, till they are thoroughly mixed and quite smooth; the longer they are stirred the better. This having been done, cover it and set it away, and five minutes before the salad is to be eaten, pour the dressing over the chicken and celery, and mix all well together.

LOLIE.—Potato-salad of a superior kind is made in the following manner:—Two cups of mashed potatoes, rubbed through a colander; three-fourths of a cup of chopped cabbage, white and firm; two tablespoonfuls of cucumber pickle, also chopped; the yolks of two hard-boiled eggs, pounded fine, and all to be well mixed together. The dressing consists of one raw egg, well beaten, one tablespoon of celery-seed, one teaspoonful of white sugar, one teaspoonful of flour, half a cupful of vinegar, and salt, mustard, and pepper to taste. Boil the vinegar, and pour it upon the beaten egg, sugar, butter, and seasoning. Wet the flour with cold vinegar, and beat into this. Cook the mixture, stirring until it thickens, and pour scalding hot upon the salad. Toss with a fork, and allow it to become very cold before eating.

HARRY B.—Temperance is certainly to be advocated, but in the matter of total abstinence every man must be a law unto himself. To some persons it is unquestionably a necessity; to many it would, no doubt, be an advantage; but it is to be hoped that the majority of those who have arrived at full age have sufficient control over their appetites to be able to enjoy food and drink without self-indulgence, and in this connection it should not be forgotten that many more die every year from over-eating than from over-drinking. The diminution in the drinking habits of the community of late years is largely to be accounted for by the action of the School-boards and the general spread of education under the Act of 1870, which, we firmly believe, will continue to bear excellent fruit, in spite of grumblers and dogs in the manger, who are so ready to fall foul of what they do not understand.

JEMMY LE BEAU.—1. Put a little new milk in a saucer, a little brown soap in another, and have by your side a clean towel folded three or four times. Spread the glove out carefully on the cloth. Dip a piece of clean white flannel in the milk, and with the wet flannel take up a good bit of soap. Then rub the glove with the flannel briskly from the wrist to the fingers, taking care to see that it does not slip. When the glove, if white, looks of a dingy yellow, or if coloured dark and spotty, shake it well and hang it in the open air to dry. If carefully carried out this method of cleaning kid gloves is one of the simplest and best known. 2. To clean gilt frames wash them very carefully with soap and water and then varnish. 3. He ought to come near where she lives if there is nothing to prevent him. 4. No; it is too small, should be three times the size. 5. Impossible, without knowing the kind of voice and whether male or female. Any music-seller could give you a list.

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